







LIFE AND LETTERS OF H. TAINÉ

1853-1870



PART I

1828-1852

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# LIFE AND LETTERS OF H. TAINE

1853-1870

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## CHAPTER I

1853-1854

Preparation of Essay on Titus Livius—  
Treatise on Consciousness—Scientific  
Studies—Laryngitis—Essay rejected by  
the *Académie Française*—Correspondence

HIPPOLYTE TAINÉ, having successfully defended his Thesis, spent a short holiday in the Ardennes on the occasion of his elder sister's marriage,<sup>1</sup> and returned to Paris to resume his laborious career. He supported himself by means of a few private lessons and spent much of his time in public libraries, collecting material for the Essay on Titus Livius, to which he gave up his summer holidays.

A letter written to his mother on September 4, 1853, runs thus: "My work is getting on more quickly than when you were here, but still with some difficulty. I give up my whole day to it, just running out to my meals and now and then to look up Suckau<sup>2</sup> or Planat.<sup>3</sup> There is nothing new here—a dead calm; the only events in my life are the passing from page 120 to page 121, or from Scipio to Paulus Æmilius."

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. p. 284, note 3.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i. p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> See vol. i. p. 7.

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The book was completed by the end of the year.

The young Doctor's desire for knowledge was not assuaged by the literary, philosophical and scientific acquirements of his studious youth, and, in the autumn of 1853, he had already returned as a student to the School of Medicine, the Sorbonne, the Museum, and the Salpêtrière. Until 1857, he continued to study Physiology and Natural Science, attending in succession lectures by MM. Duchartre, Bérard, Milne-Edwards, Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Balard, Sainte Claire Deville, Valenciennes, Baillarger and Brongniart. He supplemented their teaching by extensive private reading, and analyzed, amongst others, Cuvier's *Anatomy and Animal Kingdom*, Müller's *Manual of Human Physiology*, Milne-Edwards' *Elements of Zoology*, Serres' *Anatomy of the Teeth and Laws of Osteology*, Béclard's *General Practical Anatomy*, Grisolles' *Elementary and Practical Treatise on Internal Pathology*, Piorry's *Medical Pathology*, Chomel's *Elements of General Pathology*, Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Flourens' *Instinct and Intelligence of Animals*, Biquirol's *Mental Diseases*, Abercrombie's *Inquiry into the Intellectual Powers*, Leuret's *Philosophical Fragments*, Charma's *Sleep*, de Jussieu's *Elements of Botany*, Auguste St. Hilaire's *Vegetable Morphology*, Brongniart's *Classification of Fungi and History of Fossil Vegetation*, etc., etc.

All this scientific culture provided him with the elements of what he called his "big philosophical pudding," that *Theory of the Intelligence*, which he was still elaborating simultaneously with his literary productions. He had at that time entitled it *A Treatise on Consciousness*, and he continually returned to it, altering his rejected thesis on

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*Sensations* (1852) in conformity with his recent researches, and building upon a new plan the edifice with which he tried in vain to satisfy his philosophical conscience. When, in 1856, his health actually gave way under the strain of work, he temporarily abandoned his great enterprise; it was only eleven years later that he was able to take up again, and to bring to a successful conclusion—with the help of fresh studies, and on a modified plan—the book which he always considered as his principal work and the supreme object of his life—*L'Intelligence*.

Already in 1853 the strenuous labour of his student days was beginning to tell on Taine's physical strength; in October he developed the first symptoms of an attack of granular laryngitis, from which he suffered for several years. He had to remain in his little solitary room; wretchedly ill, almost voiceless, and yet obliged to go out to give the few lessons which were necessary to supply his frugal wants. The greatest hardship was the curtailing of his hours of work and reading; however, he bore this trial with his accustomed resignation, writing to his mother (Jan. 10, 1852): "No one ever is quite happy; but whilst we have to bear no heart-sorrows, money troubles, or dishonour, life is still endurable."

Whilst he was thus suffering in his health, the difficulties in his career were not lessening. Private lessons were scarce; he had had to give up his classes at the Jauffret boarding-school<sup>1</sup> on account of official obstacles, University professors being no longer allowed to teach in private schools; the Minister of Education, M. Fortoul, in a private interview (Jan. 17, 1854) had led him to hope

<sup>1</sup> See p. 14

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that a suspension allowance would be granted to him as a compensation, but it never came. He then tried to live by his pen, and to turn to bread-winning some of his intellectual resources, but competition for work was very great, and it was only in 1855 that he was admitted to the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique* through his relations with MM. Hachette et Cie., the great publishing firm.

His ill-health having lasted throughout the whole of the winter (1854), his friend, Dr. Guéneau de Mussy, the eminent physician of the École Normale, strongly advised him to spend his holidays at Saint Sauveur in order to cure his throat. The question of expense made this advice difficult to follow; fortunately M. Louis Hachette, on the suggestion of M. Jules Simon, who had heard of the circumstances, kindly entrusted Taine with the editing of a small *Guide to Watering Places in the Pyrenees*. This was the beginning of his relations with M. Hachette, relations based on reciprocal esteem and affection, and only ended by death. When on his return he showed his manuscript to M. Hachette, the latter declared that the title *Guide Book* was far too humble for such a literary work, and the first edition appeared in April, 1855, entitled *Voyage aux Eaux des Pyrénées*.

In the beginning of the year 1854 Taine sent his *Essay on Titus Livius* to the *Académie Française* competition. M. Guizot, with his habitual kindness, had undertaken to be sponsor to the work, and had interested several of his Academy friends in the young writer's cause. But, again on this occasion, the uncontested talent of the author was powerless against the suspicion inspired by his method and doctrines, and he was once more doomed to

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disappointment : the prize was not awarded, and the competition was postponed until the following year. The report of the permanent secretary, M. Villemain, contained the following statement :

“ The Academy had proposed as the subject of a prize competition in 1854, ‘ A Critical Study on the Genius of Titus Livius.’ Only one paper, inscribed *In historia orator*, was found worthy of notice, but it lacked sufficient warmth of enthusiasm for the historian whose value it was intended to emphasize.”

The following letters relate the various incidents of this academic struggle, M. Taine’s hesitation before he decided to recast his work and the ultimate success which, in 1855, at last crowned his efforts.

*To M. Cornélis de Witt.*

*Paris, July 24, 1853.*

MY DEAR DE WITT,—Miltiades’ laurels are keeping me awake. That illustrious Athenian<sup>1</sup> is, I hope, aware of the pleasure I take in the victory which I had anticipated<sup>1</sup> from the moment when you showed me a page of his *naama* script. As for me, my friend, I have read about fifty volumes, plus Livy’s fifteen hundred and seventy-seven pages ; I have a bundle of notes, my plan is prepared, and I shall begin my production to-morrow. I suppose it will take me six weeks or two months. I am virtuously giving up my holidays to it ; it will preserve me from the

<sup>1</sup> Allusion to M. Guillaume Guizot, M. de Witt’s brother-in-law, whose paper on Meander had just been awarded a prize by the *Académie Française*.



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*spleen*, and enable me to bring in October to the Faculty of Medicine a heart clear and free from all human preoccupations. I quite intend to reside in the Latin quarter again next year. . . :

Here is an epitome of my Titus Livius ; it is divided in three parts. (1) A biography. We have about two sentences and a half concerning him, and he does not tell us a word about himself in the whole of his 1,500 pages. (2) History looked upon as a science : from the point of view of accuracy of facts (Titus Livius, Beaufort, Niebuhr), and from the point of view of generalization (Titus Livius, Macchiavelli, Montesquieu). (3) History looked upon as an art : characteristics of nations and of individuals ; narrations and discourses, style and language. Such is the exact plan of the programme. The difficulty I find is to hit upon a characteristic and dominant trait from which the whole can be geometrically deduced ; in a word, to get at the right formula. It seems to me that this is Livy's formula : an *orator* who becomes a historian. All his faults, all his qualities, the influence exerted on him by his education, his life, the genius of his nation, of his time, his character, his family, everything comes back to that. He is an orator intended for public life, who, when public life is forbidden, throws himself back into the past, failing the present, and pleads for it. Eloquence at that time becomes rhetorical for the very reason that it ceases to be practised, except in the schools, and

Livy's eloquence strongly inclines to Rhetoric. Being an orator, he is lacking in philosophical curiosity, in desire for absolute truth and wide generalization ; he is practical, his mind is well balanced, he goes straight to his object—an ethical object—and teaches Virtue. He does not trouble to

know the real origin of things; he chooses the most beautiful tradition and majestically develops it. Again, being an orator, he is not an artist in the proper sense of the word; he does not try to reconstruct characters, to see what is beautiful and what is ugly in a nation or in an individual, to seize upon expressive or characteristic peculiarities, to paint for the sake of painting, to leave a distinct picture in the mind of his reader. He merely endeavours to plead a cause, to prove the courage of this or that army, the prudence of this or that general. He always seems to imagine himself before the Tribunal or at the Forum. Like all clever orators, he knows the great human passions and works upon them grandly, with the power of a Roman and the talent of a Greek; his history is full of movement and interest, and he gives an admirable account of public agitations and the struggles between political parties. But he only knows these passions in a general way; he represents Romulus and Paulus Æmilius alike; he knows Man but not men; he is a psychologist rather than a historian. He most resembles the two great French dramatic writers of the seventeenth century; <sup>1</sup> he is noble, regular, rational; and analytical, like them; but, like them, he is always reasoning and developing; he has not the vivid irregularity of real imagination. In a word, he is half-way between perfection on one side and the greatest faults on the other, but he is serious, exalted, honest, eloquent, and frequently attains to grandeur when considering Rome in its greatness, the centre of a conquered universe. He is not a Thucydides, a Cæsar, or a Tacitus, but he is greater than Polybius, Xenophon or Sallust.

<sup>1</sup> Corneille and Racine.

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But I am forgetting myself and you ! I am scribbling away, and I have told you nothing yet. Do not be frightened, though ; I have come to the end of my paper, and must spare you. One last request, however ; I have been given divers accounts of the system according to which the papers are corrected ; some say it is done by a Commission, others by the whole Academy. You can see how important is the difference. M. Guillaume, who has been through it, knows all these details ; could you find them out through him or otherwise, and let me know ?

I thank you for your kind and too flattering letter, though you call me a *serpent*, and speak of my *venom* ! Alas ! my dear fellow, we should go to sleep if we could not indulge in evil speaking. La Fontaine is a dangerous companion. Livy will rid me of my venom.

M. Guizot's letter is very encouraging ; it meant a great deal to me that he should have read my trifle<sup>1</sup> ; it means much more that he should speak of it as he does. I can but thank him from the bottom of my heart.

Lucky Tityrus, who canst see trees and meadows from thy window ! What an odour of musty bookshelves must this poor letter bring thee !

*To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.*

*Paris, September 17, 1853.*

I am keeping very well here, even though I am alone, better than I have ever been, and the proof that I am really quite reasonable about my work is that I never

<sup>1</sup> Taine's thesis on La Fontaine's Fables.

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overdo it, and it is ten years since I was ill. How glad I am to be out of the University ! (I have obtained my leave, by the bye). M. de Suckau senior, one of the best known teachers of German, the author of five or six educational works, who has for twenty-five years been a Professor at the Lycée St. Louis, is removed to Caen, which is equivalent to a dismissal. He will remain in Paris in any case, but perhaps without a post. That is what red tape means ! one is sent away with or without a pretext, like a mere clerk or valet : by jumping overboard I have gained freedom and security. I should be glad to take up the piano again under your guidance. My detestable Livy wears out all my will-power, and I have not enough courage to spend an hour a day moving my third finger up and down in order to regain my technique. I only play mentally now, save a little Beethoven (if only he were not so difficult or I a better pianist ! ) ; he is the only composer who is really original and eternally new. Perhaps I may play a little to-night.

Otherwise, everything is absolutely dull and devoid of any interest ; those of my friends who are in the country have come up to see me. They spend their days out there in giving lessons (we are all money-making machines !), in reading the papers at their clubs and going for walks. What was the good of spending three years at the École Normale in order to end like a vulgar tradesman ? If God and the School of Dissection will help me, I shall try next year to get away from this oppressive academical air and to write something after my own heart. Will it be worth reading ? Will it be read ? Two unanswered questions ; but one must risk something in order to obtain something.

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*To Mademoiselle Sophie Tainé.*

*Paris, October 4, 1853.*

One soon gets accustomed to pleasant things ; I did not feel very cheerful on Saturday morning<sup>1</sup> when I woke up and saw my writing-table and my yellow curtains. I shall move on the 13th. After a great deal of hunting I have found a room at No. 54, Rue Mazarine, at the corner of the Rue Guénégaud ; there is also a large dressing-room, with a bed and a window. It is well apart from the rest of the house, rather better than this, and nearer my engagements. This move and my lessons have given me a lot of running about to do. I am afraid there is trouble in store for me at the *Institution*.<sup>2</sup> The headmaster says that his delegate made a mistake, and wants me to come five times a week instead of four ; if he does not stick to his terms, I shall be off : I am well worth four francs an hour. My life is a regular hunt for game, very uncertain game.

My work has been getting on well for the last three days ; my ten days at home have rested my brain. I have started music again ; I play in the intervals of my writing. I am going to read over all the pieces I have ever played. It is like travelling over old ground, most enjoyable. You should do the same.

All the students who are leaving the École Normale this year have been given *sixième*<sup>3</sup> posts except two ; some even are mere assistant professors. Beauvallet has a *sixième*, not a *quatrième*. This proves that I did well to

<sup>1</sup> He had just returned from a ten days' stay at Vouziers.

<sup>2</sup> The Jauffret boarding-school.

<sup>3</sup> See vol. i."p. 7 (note).

go ; they were beginning to apply their system to me. What is now done is to put a professor through all the ranks, like a corporal ; and I have no wish to be either a corporal or a sergeant. Then there is that long report published by the minister,<sup>1</sup> which is excessively virulent towards the old École Normale ; it evidently tells against one to have been a student in those days. How much better is my future ! Before ten years' time—according to present chances—I shall be above the necessity of working : I shall have an income of two thousand francs (£80) a year. In the meanwhile I shall have produced a book. If it is a good one, all will be well. Until then I shall have lived in my own way, without worries, amongst clever and scientific people.

I request, Mademoiselle Sophie, that you send me your little production on thin note paper. We will talk literature and feed our letters on it. For your next piece of work, you will please look up in Malherbe's works an ode on *Louis XIII marching against La Rochelle*. Write your opinion of it, speak of it as a whole, and make your own observations on whichever verses seem to you very good or very bad. There should be a preface to the book, with some details on Malherbe's life and character, which will help you. There is also an essay by M. Saint Marc Girardin on the *Sixteenth Century*, bound up with the *La Harpe*, which you will read with pleasure and profit.

I have the honour to be, Mademoiselle,

Your affectionate Pedant.

<sup>1</sup> M. Fortoul.

## LIFE AND LETTERS OF H. TAINE

*To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.*

October 9, 1853.

My head is splitting over *Titus Livius*. I cannot finish it. I curse the day when I began it and the day when it will be completed. I have been paying several calls. The rest of the time I spend in my room, busy with this execrable Academy competition.

Now about your work<sup>1</sup> Your criticism is perfectly just: the *Socrates* is false—it is neither historical nor real. The worst of it is that M. de Lamartine lowers him; first by the lines you quote: what would be the use of being an-honourable man if there were no reward? . . . All Socrates' life and philosophy tend to prove that honour, like health, is excellent in itself, not as a means, but as an end. Again, by the weakness of the proofs he makes him give. Socrates was a most rigorous and subtle reasoner. He treated questions mathematically, with a clearness and precision which prove the calmness of his mind. Finally, by the excitement which he attributes to him. To be excited is to be weak: He who is brave because he is beside himself is not really brave. Socrates seems to be working himself up to die properly: according to Plato's account he did it quite simply, as if he were preparing to dine or to sleep.

You should have studied M. de Lamartine's style a little more; I think it fulsome; ideas are drowned in words. There are a quantity of *chaperoning* verses, which escort the others most decorously, but are only there as an accompaniment. One has to read passages over and over again

<sup>1</sup> An essay on Lamartine's *Mort de Socrate*.

in order to understand ; the principal idea gets lost in the crowd. Whilst reading, one forgets to think, one listens ; it is the *Æolian harp* of style.

Besides, he is very monotonous. At heart he is still Delille's pupil. He always brings out descriptive verses and epithets ! Two epithets, two nouns,—it is as regular as the pendulum of a clock !

“The transparent rays of sweetest light” ; “The tinted shadows of softest colours” ; “The harmonious breath of amorous zephyrs.” It almost sends one to sleep, a sweet sleep, it is true. M. de Lamartine seems to me less a man than a sylph, a cloud, a breath of wind, a ray of light, something vague which would easily dissolve in Nature's soft, formless fluid. He is a Hindoo ; he seems a yet unformed emanation of the Brahmin Infinite, which floats between Dreams and Life, which is All, which loves All, and which, in consequence, is nothing living or intelligible. He is even a little commonplace ; he has a provision of “rays trembling on the water,” of “headlands reflected in undulating waves,” of bees, flowers, stars, etc., etc., which he lets loose on the reader whenever he finds the opportunity. As soon as the first of these appears, one can safely expect the whole swarm, it is a regular overflow and always from the same tank.

He has long since been called a one-stringed poet. See his *Prière* ; you will find in it several of the lines you have sent me. Read Delille's *Jardins*, or even his *Géorgiques*, and you will see the resemblance. Real originality such as is found in Alfred de Musset, is entirely lacking in Lamartine.

In general, when you are criticising a work, try to find



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the author's character in his style and manner. Do so for Malherbe.

I lunch to-morrow with About, who is going to remain in Paris and to write, first of all, some Review articles, in order to live; and then his journey to Greece. It is a pleasure and an encouragement to be with him, he is so gay, so confident, and so full of life.

*To his Mother.*

*Paris, October 12, 1853.*

I should think of you too much if I were not in a whirl of work, classes, lessons, calls, lectures, etc. I am not ambitious enough to spend hours in vain castles in the air, nor so great a lover of pleasure as to seek after it as others do.

I have my classes: six hours a week, in two days, at M. Jauffret's, Rue des Capucines. I shall soon also have those in the Rue de Lille; they open on the 15th. It will come to three or four thousand francs altogether for this year.

I shall finish correcting Livy this evening. I am rather tired, it will rest me to copy it out. M. About is here; I have spent two or three afternoons with him. He is leaving the University; perhaps he will take to writing, perhaps he may get into the Foreign Office through some influential friends. I wish we had some of the life, strength, and cheery hopefulness that he and his family possess; he never sees any but the bright side of things, and is always ready for anything; whilst we are more fragile instruments and frequently strike a sad chord. He also is competing for an Academy prize

on another subject; he encourages me and would give me hopes if I had none. His energy is infectious; how is it that I have so little, that I do everything from sheer force of will, that I only from time to time feel an impulse of passion, a breath of power? And yet I have greater cause for cheerfulness this year than last: I have my doctor's degree, my thesis was particularly successful, my Academy paper is quite ready, and, I hope, good; I have plenty of money coming . . . At five o'clock I am going to M. Jauffret's to give my second lecture to twenty-four students. It is rather fatiguing, but it would be more so to be a Professor. Of course, one would like to have scholars built on purpose for one, according to one's own taste and measurements! It is something that they should not be worse than the average. I met one unhappy school-fellow of mine this morning who has been *sixième* Professor at Pau for two years. What a fate!! : : : Suckau is more fortunate; he has been sent to Dijon.

*To his Mother.*

*Paris, November 14, 1853.*

I am much better; I even feel almost cured<sup>1</sup> this morning. The doctor is coming this evening; he will tell me if it is all right. For the last fortnight I have been getting up at nine o'clock, dawdling in front of my fire, only going out just to whisper a lecture Rue de Lille, playing the piano and reading promiscuously. I feel as if I could sing about the *dolce far niente*—when I have recovered my voice. It really is a great pleasure to sit and dream over the fire. As I am living such a quiet life I have not much

<sup>1</sup> From his attack of laryngitis.

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for you in the way of news. M. de Witt is at Hyères with his wife, and will spend the winter there. M. Guizot's son came to see me the other day and seems desirous to see more of me. I shall show him my Academy paper; he has just obtained a prize. I will tell you if I have any hopes of success.

† My doctor, M. P., has been here five or six times; he lends me books and treatises on somnambulism, and I give him some information about Sleep: . . . for an Academy paper. The poor man has been telling me of his own struggles. He has been a physician for thirteen years. He has been a district doctor, etc., and has filled a number of honorary posts; he knows scientific men of all kinds, spends his leisure hours in writing works on botany, is a knight of the Legion of Honour, and yet it is only within the last year that he has had a sufficiently large practice. It is terribly difficult to succeed here.

Planat is much the better for his rest; it evidently is what we all wanted. . . :

I have revised my *La Fontaine* and signed a contract with the publisher. He will start it at his own expense, pay himself back out of the first profits, and halve the surplus with me. Whilst poking my fire I am sketching out the plan of that Psychology<sup>1</sup> for the sake of which I am in Paris; I am sorting out my notes and putting in order the pigeon-holes of my brain. It is like a new house in which I am going to live for two or three years. I am studying every corner of it and trying to get accustomed to the place. By degrees I am finding my way, and I begin to foreshadow in the dim distance a volume of five or six hundred

<sup>1</sup> *Traité de la Connaissance*. See Appendix I. p. 317.

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pages, with a certain air about it which I shall endeavour to make as little disagreeable as possible. For the first time in my life I shall freely say what I have to say, and say it as I like, without restrictions from the Sorbonne or the Academy. Therein lies my future. If the work is good and gets read, all will be well.

In the interval, I shall probably write a few Review articles and try to get them inserted. It is absolutely necessary that, by the time my book is finished, I should have enough acquaintances to have it well trumpeted. Without a big boom, the public does not come, and one finds that one has been writing for the stars, a poetical but insufficient audience.

My friend, Edmond About, thinks of writing for the stage; I doubt whether he has the right sort of talent. At the same time it seems to me that he does not think enough of practical necessities and does not ask himself, "How shall I pay my tailor's bill?" Do you know that your dreary philosopher is not such a simpleton in money matters as you think? the proof is that I have succeeded in saving a little money.

It is now a whole month since I spoke a word aloud!

*To M. Cornelis de Witt.*

*Paris, November 29, 1853.*

MY DEAR DE WITT,—I envy you that lovely climate, and I trust that Mme. de Witt's health is rather an occasion than a reason for spending the winter at Hyères. I remained in dingy Paris for the whole of the vacation save ten days, and I regret it all the more that I am at present foolish enough to be ill. My "miseries," as Pascal calls

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them; have seized me by the throat, by the larynx. I have been dumb for a month; I am kept in my room, I drink all manner of drugs, the inside of my throat is cauterized periodically, and I keep a prudent silence.

It shows great kindness on the part of M. Guillaume Guizot that he comes to see such an uninteresting being as I am, and I beg you will thank him for it when you write to him. But inwardly I fume. O happy street vendors who bawl so lustily in the misty dawn! The time when I could speak seems to me a myth. The worst of it is that the doctor forbids me to do any work, alleging that this inflammation is due to congestion. I spend my time watching my fire and not exactly blessing the concatenation of secondary causes. . . : Here is another trouble hanging over my devoted head. Our good mother, the University, is still pursuing me. We have been ordered to choose between the title of lecturer in a free institution and that of a member of the University. My choice would soon be made, for I do not care to retain the last remaining rag of that wretched garment. But, if I resign, I must pay my three years' board at the École Normale. I am trying to negotiate at present, pointing out to them that I am the incumbent of no lecturer's chair, receiving no fees, that I am on sick leave with a doctor's certificate, that I must work if I want to live, etc., etc. But I despair of gaining my point. It appears that they are trying to force back to the unmotherly bosom all those who have not found it comfortable and who have preferred freedom and the mountains (the Pantheon Hill!). But, whatever happens, I swear it by the immortal gods, I shall never go back.

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My essay on Titus Livius has been written for about a month, but I have not yet dared to read it once. M. Guillaume has promised to show me his prize paper on Menander ; I shall find in it the best advice possible, i.e. the sight of a successful model. All I can tell you is that my book has taken me six months' work, and I work a good many hours a day, as you know ! I continue to attend some Natural History classes, and, while poking my fire, I am planning out that Psychology of which I have so often talked to you and which I have been working at for three years.

You are enjoying sunshine and the society of your family, whilst around me everything is dark or grey ; that is why I try to live an inward life. This is truer than you think ; I am working more to occupy the present than to prepare the future. Is my work worth anything ? I doubt it, but I know that it is a remedy against *ennui*.

I have read Macaulay and admire him immensely. Thank you for the idea. I hope you will answer more lengthily than you have been doing ; and thereupon I send you a hearty hand-shake, wishing you a continuation of sunshine and roses for the whole of the winter.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, December 3, 1853.*

DEAR ED.,—I was waiting for a decision before answering your letter ; I have been to see M. Baroche, junior, my former fellow-student, who is trying, through his father, to obtain an audience for me from the Minister. Perhaps I may obtain something ; if I do not, I shall give up M. Jauffret, for I have ascertained that I should have to pay the 3,000 francs for the École Normale. It is merely

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a question of arithmetic ; it is better to lose 1,200 francs than 3,000.

M. Guéneau de Mussy has been cauterizing the inside of my throat this last fortnight, but it only eases me very slightly. I have given up working ; I spend my days over the fire, dreaming of Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's unity of composition. However, I still attend Milne-Edwards' lectures. They are interesting on account of the comparative physiology of inferior species. The science of life is a perfect chaos. M. Serres says one thing and M. Longet another. : : : Paris physicians are physicians, and nothing more. I know enough to see that neither Cuvier nor Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire is in the right. If you know any facts unknown to me concerning useless and rudimentary organs, especially of invertebrate animals, send them to me. I am making up some tables, in order to clear my mind and find some laws. About is staying in this house and takes my class at Jauffret's. He is writing a work on Greece, for Hachette, at 100 fr. (£4) a sheet. Prévost's is being printed.

Dear Ed., I do admire you: You work like several men rolled into one. And yet I blame you ; you should take care of your health. See what has happened to poor Libert ? Why do you attempt everything at once, your Doctor's degree, Natural Science Licentiate, Law, etc. ? You will be ill at the end of the year, and, when you are in your bed or in your room, you will cogitate over the requirements of the *extended ego*. And I really do not know if there is much advantage in scattering oneself in so many directions at once. You have at last emerged from University bogs, and are amongst thinking people, in a

habitable town. Your career will be easy ; you will soon reach the top. The degrees you are now working for will open the doors of a Faculty to you within three years, and some day I shall attend in Paris your lectures on Psychology. I say Paris, because I do not intend to go away. I have again heard, and from a very sure source, that M. Lesieur harbours particularly ill feelings towards me ; he wanted to nominate me somewhere or other this year, and then force me to submit or to resign. You see that officialdom being all powerful in France, I can do nothing better, under such a chief, than to remain in my room, in the Rue Mazarine.

I see from your letter that you are attending some Comparative Anatomy classes. Please be so kind as to send me all the philosophical facts you can. Is osteology explained to you ? Does your man generalize ? The plan of your *Marcus Aurelius* seems to me excellent. Give it two more months, finish it at Easter only, and make it literary. Really there are no books save amusing books ; others merely go to fill up bookshelves : and it takes time to write an amusing book ! I have read over part of my *Titus Livius*, which is certainly not that. It will be vexing to have worked for six months—for nothing !

Do you think it really necessary to put in your conclusion : “ Of what use may the example of Marcus Aurelius be to us ? ” I should avoid imitating our illustrious Professors on the History of Philosophy, who think themselves obliged, after an account of each system, to say : “ This is very true ; philosophy should profit by it,” etc.

M. P. is a charming man, and a learned one ; but he lacks the scientific spirit. He is incoherent, and I dare not tell



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him that he is not capable of dealing adequately with the question of sleep. He has not an idea of method. He ought to learn some psychology : I have given him all the information I could.

Dear old man, please do not wear out your machinery : for a month and a half I have been repenting that I had ill-treated mine. I am not very cheerful. Write to me, and let us discuss science. If it be a toy, it is the most innocent of toys.

*To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.*

*Paris, December 21, 1853.*

: : . The treatment prescribed for me is complete silence, and, consequently, solitude. I therefore depend on my books and the libraries for relaxation, and if my illness lasts a few months longer, I shall have to work for my living. My lessons do not tire me ; it is mechanical work. I have things read and explained in my presence. On Tuesdays and Fridays, between two lessons, I go to the *Cabinet des Estampes* ; on Tuesdays and Saturdays, I attend a course of lectures on Comparative Physiology. Otherwise I do not go out, and I visit nobody.

What on earth made you think, my dear Sophie, that I was very hard on your last essay ? There are some faults, but a great many merits, and some quite good passages. I wish my pupils did as well ; it is a pleasure to correct your work.

Here are my criticisms—<sup>1</sup>

“ Your observations on rhythm are excellent and

<sup>1</sup> Mdlle. Taine had sent her brother an essay on Malherbe's *Ode to King Louis XIII.*

worthy of a musician. : : : I agree with you ; only you should have said more about Malherbe's style. The *triviality* of it for one thing. *Stinking yet of thunder* : : : for instance. Then his *simplicity*, which resembles Corneille's. Compare this ode to the stanzas in *Polyeucte* ; there are some lines which are mere prose, where the poetry consists solely in the force of the thought. And his *abrupt brevity* : ' Quicksands and rocks will be harbours for thee.' Finally, the *invention* and *creation* of new and forcible expressions." . . .

All this brings to our minds the old soldier of the religious wars, writing without French models, obliged to create everything ; frank, bold and familiar in his speech, like a man of action writing with the point of his sword. His style is clean-cut and wiry, like the strong, bony frame of an old and adventurous warrior. Boastfulness suits his times and his profession. Imagination in Malherbe is scarce, but this harsh and dry soil lends exquisite beauty to the rare blooms it produces. See the lines, " How brave is his manner," etc. The second verse is worthy of Rubens in its sparkling splendour. Whilst under Boileau's sway all colours become effaced and toned down ; here there is still some of the bright sunshine of the sixteenth century. These are men, not courtiers. See his letter on the death of his son. What a tone—and it is addressed to the king ! Nothing is finer than this frank independence ; these men speak loud and firmly, and do not fear to be unmannerly when their voices and the clanking of their spurs resound through the halls of the Louvre.

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*To his Mother.*

*Paris, January 25, 1854.*

My throat takes a long time to get well ; I sit by the fire and do not feel very cheerful. I find it impossible to work : my head aches as soon as I attempt to concentrate my thoughts. I am wasting my winter miserably ; let us look forward to Spring—gentle, health-giving Spring ! I have for two months been engaged in negotiating some University business, which has just come to a tolerably satisfactory conclusion.

The Minister has issued an order forbidding members of the University to teach in private schools. I saw M. Baroche, junior, my former schoolfellow, and succeeded in obtaining an interview with the Minister. I told him my position—that I had no rank in the University and no post ; that I was ill, and that this order meant that I should lose my only means of living. He replied that the rule admitted of no exceptions, so that I am obliged to resign my post at M. Jauffret's. But, at the same time, he promised to grant me a suspension allowance, and told me to apply to him for one ; so that, after all, the misfortune is not great, for I could not have resumed my work at Jauffret's for some time. As it is, I shall receive money, and have no work to do.

I shall take a cab presently and go round to the boarding-school to announce that I am forced to leave. I shall probably come home by way of the Jardin des Plantes and have a look round the Natural History collections. How stupid life is, and what a miserable thing it is to have to spend it in this way ! And yet I am

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fortunate compared with those who have to work all day to earn their evening meal !

I am idle ; I have fits of playing the piano, and then I do not touch it for days. I have not the courage to play exercises. If only one knew everything from one's birth ! It means so much trouble to succeed in murdering a piece !

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, January 30, 1854.*

DEAR ED.,—Thy Stoic tears thee from my loving arms ! See what a poetical influence you must have over me that you inspire me with such language at a distance !! But, joking apart, how is *Marcus Aurelius* getting on ? You must be completely immersed in it, for I have not had a line from you for a month. Write, write soon, to console me for Edmond's departure. He has gone off to No. 1, Rue de Fleurus, with his people, in a gorgeous little flat, which I have not seen, but which I shall visit as soon as I am well again. For I am actually getting well ; I am not free of the disease yet, but I begin to perceive health looming in the distance. I am going to start work again. My faculties are benumbed ; the machinery does not act ; the various parts creak ; I feel heavy and lazy. I am trying to write a short article on Plato's Young Men ; it is a question of accurate translating and of literary style. I shall see afterwards whether I can get some Review to take it.

Do you go into society much ? I imagine you do not ; Edmond does so for us both. His brother-in-law was telling me yesterday that he often goes to three parties in

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one evening. Will he become a Rastignac? What a butterfly he is! And what peaceful caterpillars you and I are, crawling underground and gnawing at books.

A German *savant* has lent me Trendelenburg's *Logic*. It is metaphysical, and a criticism of Hegel. Here is the foundation of it in one word: The primitive, irreducible Element which alone composes every idea and every form of existence is Motion. From this starting point he reconstructs the world. His book is clear and not head-splitting, like the monster which it took me six months to digest at Nevers.<sup>1</sup> But neither is it gigantic like the monster. Germans always link metaphysics with logic; and since Kant they subordinate every question to the attempt to prove that Knowledge is certain and possible.

I have at last seen the Minister for four minutes and a half. I am forbidden to stay at M. Jauffret's; none of the reasons I urged availed anything. But he has told me to apply for a suspension allowance. Will the application be lost in the clerks' offices, intercepted by M. Lesieur? If I obtain nothing, there will still be time to take another engagement in a private school and to get dismissed next year. Edmond has left M. Jauffret; he found the work prevented him from going out: he does not like to be tied in any way. I wonder whether we are fools, we who think the exact opposite. In ten years' time we shall see who was right, and, upon my word, I do not know how it will turn out. I suppose it is necessary that it should be so; one cannot constrain one's nature. We follow our inclinations by staying at home, and he by going to balls.

<sup>1</sup> Hegel's *Logic*. See vol. i. p. 147.

Poor M. Guéneau de Mussy goes away to-day. He is the most delightful man I know—frank, courteous, learned in every way, tolerant of contradiction, artistic, with that mixture of sadness and merriment which constitutes wit. Disease has fallen upon him, whilst so many fools and knaves are alive and kicking: which proves that there is a Providence.

My *Titus Livius* is being recopied.

Now, my dear fellow, you have all my news. I sit by my fire. I have been once to the theatre (the *Barbieri* at the Opera), which was an imprudent thing to do. On Sundays I hear Séghers' concerts. I have been out once to see Libert, who has bouts of fever, poor fellow, and can hardly read at all.

No news of Prévost. M. Gérusez, whom I met the other day, tells me that his father is rather seriously ill.

Frankly, do you think that *Plato's Young Men* can provide an acceptable article for a review? I am going presently to the Estampes to see the Herculaneum paintings and some Greek medals. There are at the Museum three or four figures which I adore—the Apollo Sauroctonos, the two Young Athletes, and the beautiful standing youth of which Prévost has the head. They will serve me for illustration. But, good Lord, it is so long since I wrote anything that I go to it as a child to be whipped.

I have finished putting down in gibberish my ideas on Animals in general.<sup>1</sup>

As to the nervous system, I think it can be demonstrated that, in sensation, there is no transmission of movement,

<sup>1</sup> An introduction to the *Traité de la Connaissance*, entitled "De l'Individu Animal." See Appendix, p. 317.

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or passing of fluid from the nervous extremity to the brain. The action certainly takes place at a distance. And as to the motor nerves, I see no reason for or against what you say. I will write to you about it if you like.

Answer me this, you who are a scientist. Are madrepores, animals who live soldered together, thus joined by exterior union and the reciprocal encrusting of their shell, each thus preserving its individual distinction ? Or has the whole a common life, common organs, thus constituting an individual, like a plant or a tree ?

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, February 17, 1854.*

MY DEAR OLD ÉDOUARD,—I am writing from the Estampes, without a pen, as you see. I spend an hour and a half here twice a week, between two lessons. I am, indeed, sorry to hear that you are not well ! The animal is taking its revenge, my dear fellow, and, as in matrimony, one of the two consorts suffers from the mistakes of the other. Take care of yourself ; I, too, am doing all I can to get well. without much success. Next summer we really must put into practice our old plan of a walking tour, along the Rhine or elsewhere. We shall live like brutes. and feed our physical wants ; perhaps in this way we may appease Matter and recover our schoolboy robustness. It is ill-health that makes you sad and uncertain ; it is easy, when in health, to work all day, keeping one object in view and in undisturbed possession of your mind ; but, when we are ill, life becomes a constant trouble.

The course of lectures which I attend is not so interesting as you might think. Take Milne-Edwards' little book,

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*Introduction to General Zoology*, and you will have all that there is to be found in the author; beyond that he is empty. The Human Animal might be defined as a being characterized by the absence of ideas. M. Bérard, whom I go to hear sometimes, is giving a practical class with such minute details, such overwhelming erudition, that in order to find an important fact, one has to clear away a regular dust-heap of useless stuff. Courage fails me, too, sometimes. Who the deuce am I working for? Who will read a book on Psychology, save you who have no need of it? I am beginning to esteem anglers and chess-players: we do very much the same things. Wherever I look, I only see people doing extraordinarily useless things. It makes me furious to be a mere atom; and if I were not sick of other people, I should be sick of myself.

I have not taken another post instead of the Jauffret class. I am still voiceless, and can only earn just enough to live on.

I have heard nothing from the Minister. Prévost is going to write his thesis, and will, perhaps, return to the University next year. Edmond is finishing his play. Good-bye; Do write;

*To Édouard de Suckau:*

*Paris, March 14, 1854:*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—How are you? You have not answered, and it is a month since I had your last letter! I am like you, old fellow, very unwell. My throat is getting no better; I shall probably have to go to some watering-place and to spend the winter in the south, just when my mother is coming to settle down in Paris. Besides,



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it will mean losing the chance of earning my living, and put me under the necessity of building up my position again. It is the second time that my career seems to melt in my hands. To crown everything, my head is so bad that I cannot work an hour, and I get feverish attacks besides. I am absolutely wretched, and we may well sing in unison, you in Dijon and I in Paris, one of the choruses of *Æschylus*—

τω τω τω τω τω τω τω  
ὄτο το το το το το το τοι τοι δα

I have kept just enough private pupils to pay for my food and my room ; the rest of the time I try to occupy my brain, which, in spite of my efforts, keeps picturing my future in soot colour. M. Milne-Edwards' course of lectures amused me for some time ; now I only attend them for conscience sake ; fortunately, they are going to end soon. He described circulation and respiration very well ; the rest was not worth a bad manual. Sometimes M. Bérard says some interesting things. But the lack of work and of conversation is killing me.

I wished to read your friend Lyall, but, of course, he is not to be found in the library of the School of Medicine; or in any other. I have long ago verified the axiom—"Do you wish never to find a book ? Look for it in the libraries."

Edmond has sent his poem to the Academy and his play to the Comédie-Française. He still looks as happy as several happy men ; I envy him. It seems to be a question of temperament. At the École I had everything that suited my tastes and Hope besides ; and yet, if you remember, we used to write elegies together, and I was as bored as a collection of stuffed hippopotamuses. Poor beasts !

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I went to see them lately. They are in an icy cold gallery beyond the madrepores and worms; and they look so dull—they who used to swim in Abyssinia, in tepid water, and to sleep to their hearts' content in the mud or in the long grass! Destiny has made a mistake. I should have been born an oyster, at the bottom of the Red Sea; you know that used to be the object of my dreams and aspirations. I am almost inclined to believe in an immortal soul in the hope that this may be realized one day.

I suppose you go out into the country? The blue atmosphere is of an extraordinary beauty; if I had not this constant fever and dull headache, I should spend my time in the sunshine.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, May 8, 1854.*

DEAR ED.,—*De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine.* How are you, old man? You are bored, I am bored, we are bored, we may well conjugate the verb. This is the state of things and circumstances generally concerning myself.

My throat is better. The homœopath is giving me some phosphorus which will perhaps cure me. I have heard the sound of my voice; it is getting clearer, but it still sounds like that of a hoarse rhinoceros.

This is the trouble: my poor *Titus Livius* is in a bad way. Our good Edmond, sanguine as usual, had thought well of the news I had of it. M. Guizot thinks it good, but M. de Salvandy . . . I am intriguing, begging right and left for recommendations. There, as in everything, it is a question of votes and good will. The faults or merits of my book mean nothing in themselves; they are but

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arguments which the members of the Commission will throw at each other's heads. The decision will be known at the end of the month.

About, with young de Varennes, has written the plan of a topical melodrama in seven tableaux, called *Schlamyl*. It is terrible and tragic; there is a traitor and an under-traitor; a young heroine shoots the traitor. The son of Schlamyl, brought up in Russia, joins the party of his country and of his father. The colour is as local as possible: knout, depredations by Russian stewards, white mountains, etc.; at the end, French and English arrive, and relieve Schlamyl, trapped between two [Russian] Army Corps. An opportunity is afforded to show three hundred uniforms on the stage, to tickle the national pride, and to offer a mouthful of Cossack to every French appetite. : : : Joking apart, I do not know what the play will be when it is written, but it seems to me neither well planned nor very original. I always come back to this: Voltaire was not a dramatic poet. Is Edmond one?

In order to kill time, I have been reading all sorts of Italian books, Benvenuto Cellini, Vasari, Boccaccio, Macchiavelli, without making up my mind about the little book I mentioned.<sup>1</sup> It makes the picture clearer to me. The Italian Society of the sixteenth century was an assemblage of ferocious brutes, with passionate imaginations. Present day flunkys would refuse to associate with the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara, the Popes Paul III, Julius II, Borgia, etc. ; ; ; They had no wit, no grace, no ease, no gentleness, no ideas, no

<sup>1</sup> A book on the Louvre Museum which Taine had thought of writing.

philosophy. Instead of these, pedantry, coarse superstitions, continual danger, the necessity of fighting at every street corner for one's purse or one's life, unnatural vices, prostitution, all this with an incredible crudeness and brutality. That is why invention in their pictures is poor, composition lacking, great ideas, always so abundant in Delacroix, invariably absent, the types very far from Greek beauty and nobility. These men are artisans who have for three centuries drawn figures, poses and colours; they do so with admirable perfection, but they invent nothing beyond that. For them perfection consists in a well drawn human body or in a bit of true colouring. Vasari, who relates their lives at great length, and who describes their work, can see nothing more. He is a contemporary, and his testimony proves what was the object artists then proposed to attain. He admits that Raphael was the first to discover that, besides human anatomy, there were also animals, plants, landscapes, night effects, etc. : : : These people evidently had a limited mind; Cellini, for instance, thinks he has found an admirable idea by twisting together in a group the limbs of Earth and of the Ocean, because, he says, Sea and Land advance one within the other.

Michael Angelo, the most powerful creator that the world has seen, has not gone beyond Anatomy. He knows how to draw sublime figures, of a prodigious strength and wonderful relief, with a marvellous violence and variety of attitudes, but that is all. His Last Judgment is but a mass of heaped-up human shapes. See as a contrast that of the Englishman, Martyn: Brought up *à la moderne*, philosophically, he starts from the general

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idea to which he is accustomed: "What is the Last Judgment?" His imagination presents to him a vague image, dark and infinite space broken by rays of lurid light, fantastic and uncertain groups, half hidden, emerging here and there, : : : a whole universe. Individual figures are effaced, only one thing, the idea of the Last Judgment, predominating; they are there but as a means to an end, and merely help to express the idea of terror and grandeur. Michael Angelo starts from the definite idea of a nude man, in accordance with his education as a sculptor; there is in his head but one perfectly precise and living idea. His means of expressing terror is not to accumulate and to efface his figures, to drown them in the depths of the Vague and the Infinite, but to bring out with passionate violence their muscles and their bones, to dig his pencil into the lines of their faces, to contort them into bold attitudes, etc., etc. : : : Briefly, this is my principal idea: the enormous mass of general and philosophical ideas which has been poured into men's brains for the last three centuries has transformed their imagination. Hence a new ideal, a fresh distribution of characters, another choice of subjects, other attitudes and expressions. The same thing has happened in painting as in literature. Our masters no longer study language, combinations of words, justness of detail, regular and luminous order of composition, as did Boileau, Malherbe and Balzac. We write like coal-heavers, as did St. Jerome and St. Augustine. But Boileau's ideas would nowadays make a *seconde* schoolboy yawn. The same thing is true again in music, if we compare, for instance, Haydn and Paesello with Mendelssohn

or Meyerbeer. The predominance of general ideas, the enlargement and increased complexity of thought, the richer and bolder invention, the more imperfect execution, the science of detail almost lost, exact truth often found lacking upon close observation—I see the same characteristics everywhere, and it seems to me that I can explain almost everything,—with this general reservation, that Venice will have to be studied as well as Rome.

There! What a tirade! As I cannot talk on account of my throat, I let myself loose whenever I find an opportunity.

I attend Brongniart's lectures at the Jardin des Plantes, without taking any notes. It is Jussieu made clearer. But one should have time, health and energy, and go herb-hunting in the fields. I went to hear M. Claude Bernard at the Sorbonne: commonplaces, painfully uttered by a man who does not know how to speak in public. M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire and the others repeat the same things regularly every year. And they are right, by Heaven! It is supreme happiness to become a mill-horse and to go round and round without further research or invention.

I am disgusted with everybody, dear Édouard. Germans make intolerable hypotheses, Frenchmen make none, Englishmen do not even suspect that one could make any. I listen to facts; who will give me Science? I was saying just now that we were full of general ideas!! I sincerely retract; I see no one who has or wants any. My poor little *La Fontaine* is a big proof of it. Will you believe that of all those who have spoken of it to me, save you and Prévost, only two people have understood that

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I was seeking for the general laws of the Beautiful! What was the good of toiling to give two hundred pages of examples and explanations, and then not even being heard! Conclusion: let your Marcus Aurelius be a biography.

I have not seen Prévost and know nothing about his book. It is raining; I do not know what to do, and hardly dare set to work again, for fear my vile body should object; I read Voltaire, the only man, with Beyle, of whom I do not get tired. I feel old and worn; everything tires me; it seems to me that something has gone wrong with my moral machinery, that the wheel of Hope is broken. When I touch Science everything seems to me limited or uncertain—uncertain especially: Where is there any certainty in History, or in Natural Science? Their laws are constantly being corrected, their experiments disproved. In my Psychology I find errors and new points of view every day. How many things which at first sight seemed to me solid and now have to be tried and tested again! I leapt over scepticism with one bound, and now it is claiming its share and telling me that, save Mathematics, our Sciences are nothing but probabilities.

My poor Ed.; dumbness makes me prolific: Write to me lengthily in your turn:

*To M. Hatzfeld.*

*Thursday, May 12, 1854.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Thank you for thinking of me; but the youth in question is ill, so that the lesson seems

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to have flown away on the wings of fever, without promising to come back. Will you kindly give me M. Franck's address? I must leave a card to thank him for having given my name.

Your verdict on Livy and the other writers was that I do not admire enough. It is true, but that is because I admire other things.

Do not believe that the faculty of appreciating beautiful things has become weakened in me. There are certain modern books which I have read sixty or eighty times within the last six years and that I would read again to-morrow with pleasure. There are certain poems of Alfred de Musset which I have learnt by heart involuntarily and unconsciously—a thing which has never happened to me with the lines of any other poet; there are scenes in *Faust* (the last one of the first part, for instance) which have given me the same degree of emotion when reading them for the tenth time as when I first read them.

I consider that the style of the modern writers is inferior to that of the older ones. We do not know our own language. The deeper sense of words, the strength of certain turns of phrase, everything that has to do with detail and execution, is lost. We are like Delacroix, who draws arms that are too long, legs that seem unhinged and figures which look as if they had been fried in butter. We sketch, we no longer draw; but our artists have greater ideas and their work have more life. You see that I oppose the so-called *romantic* writers to the writers of the seventeenth century, and those of the time of Augustus, those, in fact, who are called *classical*. It is an old dispute, and it is ridiculous in 1854 to go back to 1828.



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But we are dealing with two absolutely different styles starting from different literary theories.

I believe that I differ from you, not because I admire great men less, but because I have another definition for Beauty. I tried to give it in my *La Fontaine*. We both agree that one of the conditions of the Beautiful is Unity—that all the parts of one work should be directed towards one object, that an artist is not a photographer. I think I diverge from your opinion when I add that the artist should seek the truth, not only of general, but also of particular features, that the being which he creates should be marked by a personal, incommunicable and original impression, and that life consists precisely in that character which distinguishes a man from every other, which makes all his movements, all his ideas, all his actions, belong to him alone—as opposed to pure ideas, commonplace types and cold allegories. This is most certainly the point on which we differ.

This *characteristic*, as the Germans call it, is not local colour. All Shakespeare's *dramatis personæ* are Englishmen of the sixteenth century, and not Romans, Barbarians or Italians. The same remark applies to Rembrandt, my favourite amongst painters. But they have that characterized originality for which I am seeking: they are true and living; they are real and complex beings, and not mere ideas. When I read Corneille and Racine, I hearken to eloquence, I am struck with the grandeur of certain answers or the grace of certain analyses. But I own that I do not see men. These are general passions, discussing, reasoning, and struggling. Let me exaggerate to make myself clearer: it seems to me that one

could do without any names, and call these figures the King, the Queen, the Friend, the Lover, the Mistress, etc.

I never have any illusions whilst reading them ; it has never happened that I have forgotten my book and believed for a moment that I saw men in danger, suffering sorrow, moved by real passions. It does happen to me constantly while reading *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Henry IV*, and I have often experienced it when reading Goethe, Byron, Beyle, Balzac and Musset. Each word strikes to my very heart ; I feel all the sudden, heartrending and transient effects of passion, all the depth, madness and strangeness of human emotions—not after studying and pondering over the book as when I read the others, but at once, and involuntarily. I am enslaved, the impression persists after I leave off reading, and two hours later, while I am walking or dining, the same image reappears unbidden and stands before my brain. The beautiful, regular works of classical times seem to me dull from their very majesty, and—saving the Greeks—I always return, whether I will or not, to those writers whom I have quoted.

Two pictures will illustrate my meaning. Take one of Raphael's works, any one you like, or an engraving after one of his pictures. Place next to it an engraving of Rembrandt's *Christ Healing the Sick* (the *Hundred guilders print*). The hovel in which Christ is standing is ignoble, the sick that are brought to him are wrapped in horrible, dirty rags, their flesh is a mass of open putrefying sores, the incredulous Pharisees on the left have the vilest and most cruel faces imaginable. All that is true, but no matter ! I have never been able to ask myself whether this

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picture was beautiful or not. I cannot criticise it as a judge ; when I look at it I lose all power of reasoning ; I am like a surgeon about to dissect a corpse and suddenly feeling the flesh thrill under his instruments. Those eyes, those attitudes, those arms stretched out to the Christ, the bitter and yet hopeful expression of those tortured faces, Christ's infinite compassion, all that is *poignant*, it is life itself, but condensed ; all the sorrows of a hospital, of Humanity, within twelve square feet. There is no question of flesh-tints, of the position of this or that limb, of the harmony of the composition ; the bodies are transfigured, the soul bursts through its shell ; the most penetrating, the most powerful human feelings and passions, are there, seizing hold of one's heart by an irresistible grip. It is beyond Art, it is Genius itself, which cannot be taught, analysed or discussed. Here, I consider, lies the divine beauty of Shakespeare and of Rembrandt ; they have a similar genius, and are alike in their errors ; they constitute the clearest application and justification of my principle : " Art is a general idea made as particular as possible." And, of the two, Rembrandt is the greater. Take a passion ; express it by a gesture and a look ; there is but one indivisible moment in that gesture which is really expressive. Of all the muscular contractions, all the gradations of colour which the face goes through, there is but one tint, one disposition of the muscles which is expressive. The attitude lasts two seconds ; only one moment in those two seconds can render passion. Rembrandt hits upon that lightning moment ; ordinary, cultured painters consider that every one of the moments which compose those two seconds is fit to express their

idea: I know some pictures of Poussin, of Raphael even; where the model seems to have been sitting for six minutes. Rembrandt and a few others, on the contrary, have seized this moment as it passes. It is the same with poets. Instead of the line and colour which is exclusively appropriate to a given idea, they find a word, a metaphor, a turn of phrase, a psychological detail, which can be found nowhere else and only suits that particular moment. That, as I think, is what constitutes the life of a work of art. Amongst other works which seem to live, I will quote Pláto, La Fontaine, Bossuet's *Traité de la concupiscence*, and, by modern writers, Alfred de Musset's *Rolla* and *Nuit d'Octobre*, Victor Hugo's *Fantômes* and *Chant du cirque*, nearly the whole of *Faust*, and a number of short odes by Goethe; also many works by our minor poets, many little sixteenth-century pieces, etc.

Am I a heretic in your eyes? I am afraid I am. I own that I consider our literature is not a deterioration but a transformation, that if we have lost we have also gained, and that we have on the whole gained more than we have lost. For educational purposes, nothing is better than the study of the classics. They alone are perfectly expressed, and alone can teach us to analyse and to clear our ideas. It is different in Art. Classical literature, having no *dramatis personæ*, but passions and general types dressed up as men, could not furnish us with many excellent works because there are not many types or many passions. After Corneille and Racine, that is, after twelve good plays, Tragedy has produced nothing new; it is a worn-out mould which Voltaire spoilt when he tried to fill it.

Literature which paints individual reality instead of a

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general ideal has an unlimited future, constantly renewed by the changes of society. In fifty years' time we may have another Beyle and another Balzac.

I am letting all these ideas flow from my pen; consider my theories and forgive my expressions; I do not ask you for frankness; you are almost the only man who has always honoured me with it. Be certain that I shall always deem it a favour to be treated as a man, and that nothing gives me more pleasure than arguments, from you, even if they be against me. I hope you will kindly tell me about your lectures and your affairs in general. As for me, when my head does not ache, I work at psychological researches.

I am attending some botany lectures, giving a few private lessons, and looking out for more. Having lost all hope of a successful future, or of attaining any social rank, I now merely try to earn my living, and interest myself in books and in things; and I count as good fortune those moments when you allow me to converse with my former teacher and old and valued friend.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, May 27, 1854.*

Is it Marcus Aurelius or the ball that has made you dumb? As a punishment, I will write you a purely philosophical epistle. I have for the last fortnight been puzzling over a question, to which I am unable to find an answer: *Illumina cor meum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum.*

“Édouard de Suckau is a fool, a hypocrite, and a coward.”

There, I hope that made you jump, as it would me in

your place. All the better, the experiment has succeeded. Now for my question :

It is clear to me that, in reading that sentence, you have not perceived the actions of which those three fine epithets are the epitome. It is again clear to me that you have not even perceived one of these actions, or anything analogous. You have only perceived signs which have made you pronounce to yourself three sounds. As to the *sense*, your imagination, being accustomed to associate such sounds with all those sounds which we call nouns, has received no kind of shock whilst combining them ; you felt, so to speak, that they would “do,” that those signs were “fitting.” In order to prove this, see the contrary, see a phrase with no sense whatever : “Édouard is a pair of spectacles” ; our habits of imagination will receive a shock, and the non-sense will consist in that shock merely. Briefly, as may be seen by an arithmetical or algebraical proposition,  $64 = 32 \times 2$ , the sense of abstract words or of abstract signs, in rapid and ordinary operations, is nothing but ease in association. I say in rapid operations, for if I dwell on the abstract word “hypocrite” I shall presently see all sorts of images, a wry-necked Jesuit, an ingrate, a *Tartufe*, etc. ; the word will appear to me associated with and attached to each of those images, so that it will become one with them. But in quick and ordinary operations images are lacking, and nothing exists in the mind but images due to habitual association. If you want a convincing example of this, take the shortest algebraical equation, or six phrases from a philosophical book. You will see that our superior operations very much resemble those of an arithmetical machine, that we merely substitute signs for other

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signs, and that we never perceive the general qualities which those signs represent. I therefore state this point, which seems to me obvious : the sense of an abstract word is the property which that sign has of associating easily and naturally with this or that class of signs, and, in rapid and ordinary operations, nothing exists in the mind but that sign and that ease of association.

Now it is proved by the phrase which made you jump, that an abstract word, rapidly read, develops in us a passion, that is a pain. And every pain is but the passing of the more to the less. (Spinoza.)

But it is not the sound or the sign in itself which is a passing of the more to the less. Then it must be that facility of association—which is absurd. And there is my difficulty.

[I can understand that, if I represent to myself a living man, and a moment afterwards that same man dead, I shall suffer. For, a positive quality, which was to be found in the first image, will be lacking in the second. The inward sight which I fixed on that image acted more in the first case than in the second ; hence a diminution of action, hence sorrow. If we suppose, with Spinoza, that all ideas are operations like this one, nothing is more simple than to explain the sorrow caused by abstract ideas. But it is not so. Images are often absent, they only present themselves at poetical moments. Half the time, when we are reflecting, we are having what Descartes calls pure thoughts. And it is easy to convince oneself that pure thoughts are but signs diversely combined, of which certain classes have affinities for other classes. I used not to believe this ; I laughed at Condillac, who gives no proofs ; but it is all

evident in arithmetic, in algebra, etc: When you pronounce this phrase:  $84 = 42 \times 2$ , you do not perceive the 84 units contained in 84, not even those contained in 42 or in 2; you only see that either of these expressions could be put in the place of the other; or else, whilst working out the sum, you see a 4 appear in the place of the 2 of 42, and an 8 instead of the 4, which gives 84.

In neither case do you perceive the objects signified, that is, the units which are represented. Examine in the same way the following phrase: "Animals are sensitive beings; now vertebrates are animals, therefore vertebrates are sensitive," etc. : : : In a word, ideas are but signs, each sign having various aptitudes for association. How can a sign hurt like an idea? Through what chance can an association, intelligible in itself, that is easy and natural become a diminution of being? I can in no way explain it. At first, I thought that the perceptible image often associated with an idea was the only cause of pleasure or pain; for instance, when you say a *soiled character* you conjure up the idea of dirt. : : : But images only add to an impression, they do not constitute it. Think over it, especially over this definition of abstract ideas, which we had not broached, and which throws me into my present darkness; and then write me an answer.

I have written you two letters, one of which is enormous, You now owe me twelve pages of manuscript at least.

<sup>Bad</sup> news, generally. My throat is worse again: My book on the Louvre is cut from under my feet—it is being written at M. de Newerkerke's. I wanted to write a little book on Montluc, for railway stations: the Railway Library is suspended. Acting on Simon's advice, I offered



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Hachette a little book on the Pyrenees : another man is already doing it. Translations, etc., from Latin and Greek : his collection is about complete, and he has salaried people who cannot give up their daily bread. German or English translations : there are fifty poor devils with prior claims. I had found a pupil : he is ill. I shall go to a watering-place, but without much hope ; the waters cure everything, i.e. nothing, and I am vexed to think that next winter I shall have no writing to do, and I can only earn my living by teaching. Will you find me a situation as valet in one of the illustrious Dijon families ?

Read a Dijonnais's Journey to Italy, Des Brosses, 1739.

*To M. Cornélis de Witt.*

*Paris, May 27, 1854.*

MY DEAR DE WITT.—I was sorry to miss M. Guizot on Wednesday. On Thursday I was afraid to trouble him on the eve of a journey, and I have not been able to tell him how glad I was of his approbation and how thankful for his help. I see by your letter what I already knew,<sup>1</sup> that his suffrage counted for eighty per cent. in my success. Guillaume has been most kind to me ; wherever I turn I have to give thanks, and I do so heartily, especially to you. I hope you will help me to thank the others ; I had become unaccustomed to kindness, and it amply compensates me for all the worries I have endured.

I shall start at the end of June, probably ; I do not yet know whither ; the doctor will decide. I have left my homœopath ; he bored me, and I think that the improve-

<sup>1</sup> M. Guizot had too hastily announced to M. Taine the success of his Essay on Titus Livius in the Académie Française competition.

ment I attributed to him was due to the spring and to the presence of my mother. Many physicians are sceptical in medicine : I know some who only believe in quinine and in surgery. It is probably like so many apparent truths which melt between one's fingers when closely pressed. I shall let Nature act : she will do better than physicians.

It seems to me that Thucydides' works must have resembled the new History<sup>1</sup> that we were speaking of, in severity, energy, and precision. Both writers relate events without intervening in them ; both efface themselves, the facts speak without need of an interpreter ; one feels, so to say, face to face with the past. They have the same force, the same gravity of judgment ; one feels the weight of intense and impartial reflection, which does not ask for your assent, but imposes conviction upon you, and speaks as if it addressed Truth itself, and not the public.

Like you, I recognize great differences. Thucydides was the first among the Greeks to write on politics. He accumulates ideas in his discourse to a wearisome extent. And then his account is a journal, and the chronological order hides the great movement and the dramatic progress of events. The ancients did not compose as well as the moderns ; we have no philosopher whose works are as disconnected as those of Aristotle. As to ethical reflections, you will find a very beautiful and very sad piece after the Coreyra revolts. I suppose, too, that you are still in the first book, which is mostly taken up with an exposition of the state of ancient Greece. You will, I think, acknowledge that no ancient historian has more resemblance with the one we are discussing. After an interval

<sup>1</sup> M. Guizot's historical work.

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of twenty centuries, only general features can be compared.

The Academy will, I am told, give its decision on Thursday.

*To Guillaume Guizot.*

June 3, 1854.

MY DEAR GUILLAUME.—It appears, not that I have thanked you too soon, but that you congratulated me too soon: *Titus Livius* has returned to the realms of the future. There was a great discussion on Thursday, but no conclusion, and a postponement to Tuesday. I saw M. Patin, who was kind enough to take my part, but I am reproached with—

Too little respect for Livy and for great men in general,

A want of gravity in my style,

A lack of elegance in translation,

Too strong an inclination in favour of modern ideas.

My impression is that my chances are about two to five. On Wednesday I will write and tell you what is decided. Thank you, whatever happens, for your past, present and future sympathy !

*Non ignare boni miseris succurrere nosti.*

Through these vicissitudes in my fate, I am, like you, occupied in reading Henri Beyle ; it takes my thoughts away from everything else. I even amuse myself by taking notes on *Rouge et Noir* ; I should like to account to myself for that marvellous writing. How is it that a man can succeed in getting his work re-read so many times ? At the first impression one is struck and delighted, but nothing

more. Now, I am beginning to understand the connection between the different parts of Julien's life and character. Never have the nature and logic of ideas and passions been so profoundly observed.

If your house is not yet pulled down in November, I will go and rummage in your papers for my *Plato's Young Men*, which we forgot there. Some one had led me to think that you were taking farewell of your friends on Thursday evening, and I had asked Edmond, if it were so, to take me round. As it was not the case, I supposed that you were packing books, and I respected that holy occupation.

If Washington or any other American is not too absorbing ask de Witt to remember to write to me sometimes. Please offer to your father the expression of all my gratitude for his many kindnesses ; the difficulties I am going through are a measure of all that he has done for me:

*To Prévost Paradol:*

*Paris, June 3, 1854.*

MY DEAR FRIEND.—I am going to fall to the ground in the most ridiculous manner: This morning I saw one of the judges, M. Patin, who tells me that yesterday the Academy discussed M. Guizot's report, and whether the prize should be awarded to me. The matter has been postponed till Tuesday, and the decision is very doubtful. M. Guizot is in the country, so I have lost my strongest ally. Could you enlist the help of M. Mignet? The voice of such a historian as he is would be most powerful in a historical matter. : : :

Between now and Tuesday I will work hand and foot for

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this last struggle. Two members of the commission were, as I told you, in favour of an adjournment. M. Patin declares that he supported me ; but imagine what the support must be of a worshipper of Latin, a pure Academician !

So, if you can approach M. Mignet without indiscretion, do so for my sake, old man. Let us fight the Philistines ; it is so long since victory was my lot that I should be glad to use the jawbone of an ass against them. Think how much rather I would have you and M. Mignet.

One of these days I will talk to you about your big book,<sup>1</sup> which is not only grave, moderate, well written, and well composed, as everybody has told you, but also amusing and full of life.

If you should think fit to see or to borrow my manuscript, it will be at your disposal to-morrow at my rooms until twelve o'clock. After that I shall go into the country and see if I can get hold of one or two of the judges.

Yours.

*To Guillaume Guizot:*

*June 7, 1854.*

MY DEAR GUILLAUME.—The prize is held over till next year. Here recognize the fortunes of Carthage: When you announced my success I was amazed, for I am not accustomed to success ; it seemed as if chance had made a mistake in my favour ; you see the mistake was soon corrected.

But all is not lost, for in this business I have again experienced your father's kindness, and added something to all I already owe him:

<sup>1</sup> *Revue de l'Histoire Universelle.*

Here are the details of the story: I have them from an Academician. A member of the majority rose and owned that in spite of his vote he still felt a few scruples; after that conscience had been unloaded, M. Cousin addressed the meeting with his habitual passion and requested that the piece should be read. The passage about Montesquieu provoked great indignation; it was not considered admissible that there should be another philosophy of history, and especially that it should be drawn from contemporaries; worse still, from Germans. All this took place on Thursday. Between the two meetings I saw several members, some friendly and some hostile. M. Cousin told me that he did not know I was the author of the memoir. M. de Vigny, M. Vitet, and M. St. Marc Girardin defended me. I see by your letter that M. Guizot had interested several people on my behalf.<sup>1</sup>

"Si Pergama dextra  
Defendi possent" . . . .

On your return I shall ask you to explain certain doubtful points; a few words I have overheard lead me to believe that your conjecture is founded on fact.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter from M. Villemain to M. Guizot: "My dear friend, it is only in your own hands that your weapons are successful. We have been beaten on the Livy prize, after a long meeting, when I gave the best reasons I could, and when M. Vitet, who has read the work, debated most perfectly. However, though regretting the result, I believe, as is eloquently said by many people on all sides, that it is for the good of the author, whose work, easily improved, shall be rewarded next year.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Guillaume Guizot (June 5, 1854): "I suspect that some ingredient from the Ministry of Public Education might

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Should I alter my work? I have talked about it with several of my adversaries, and, if I understand them, I should have to suppress everything that is worth keeping: Am I ever supple enough to succeed in this manner? Formerly, I could have done so; I once had a prize for a translation because, in order to conciliate a professor, I had succeeded in putting three meanings into each sentence, allowing that kindly guide to lead me: Those happy days are no more; besides, I should be afraid to shock one whilst pleasing another. One judge told me that my first page about Montesquieu was excellent, another that it was ridiculous. My German philosophers teach the doctrine of the conciliation of contraries; I do not know whether I should be capable of applying it:

You are indeed a man after my own heart, with your long letters! and about Beyle, too! You spoil me, and I am afraid to answer you, I should say too much: I am like Nestor; on that subject I could speak for a year or even two without fatigue—to myself, but not to you. Let me only answer your principal reproach: He will never be popular, and that through his own fault, it is true: But is that a fault? Is being read the object of an artist? It is if he is searching for glory, money or public utility; not if he loves the beautiful purely and for its own sake: Beyle has written for his own greatest possible pleasure, without

have entered into the composition of the bitter pill which some would have you swallow. Fortoul, who was not elected last week [to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres] probably feels vindictive towards the Liberal Party in the Institute, and against my father in particular; and, as he knows you already] see vol i., p. 190], he has probably urged his friends to avenge his own defeat on your head."

care for the public; I like this carelessness; it does not come from insolence (at least in the *Chartreuse* and in Julien); it is a principle, and due to vivacity of conception. As a proof of this, read his letter to Balzac.

Why should artists look upon themselves as teachers of men? They worship an idea and not the crowd; it is our business to introduce them to the public. If a writer's object is to interest and to teach a great many readers, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the greatest of masterpieces. I am much more of an aristocrat on that point than you are, in Science as well as in Art. Do you believe that Aristotle wrote his *Metaphysics* or Spinoza his *Ethics* in the hope of having many readers? The one showed his notes to Eudemus or to Theophrastus, the other sent his theorems to Louis Mayer, both of them entirely persuaded that their analyses or deductions would not alter the least of human affairs and certain that they would be disfigured, forgotten, or abused for a long time: which is what happened. Solitude reigns on the summit of ideas; it is worse for those who are at the bottom than for him who has reached the top. Let me quote to you, who love Greek, a saying of Aristotle's, "The more useless and unpopular a science is, the more precious it is."

I agree with you about my *Young Men of Plato*; I had become a Greek whilst studying them and forgotten their indecency; translations have the same defect. M. Cousin's elegant Plato is not at all like the easy, almost childish, but always natural, Plato of reality. He would shock us if we saw him as he is. It is always the same story; ideas must be dressed, or a policeman comes in, considers them immoral, and puts them in prison.



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Will you be kind enough to console me for my discomfiture ? It is easy for you to do so. Write to me as often and as lengthily as you can, and believe me your very affectionate comrade.

*To Guillaume Guizot.*

*Paris, 18th, 19th or 20th June, 1854.*

I will begin by your conclusion, my dear Guillaume : *Rouge et Noir* is so called because it ought to be called otherwise.

As to the other question—should I write my Memoir over again ?—you are so nice to me that I will do whatever you like ; you say that M. Guizot would point out my mistakes. It would be double profit, and I should willingly do the work in order to be corrected. Do not believe that paternal tenderness makes me hesitate ; I know but too well that my poor offspring is lame ; but if I have understood the objections made I should have to break its other leg. I swear that my confession is *bonâ fide*. I have read it over, and found it dull ; I forced myself to turn the pages, I was not attracted to do it. The plan alone is good, the rest has that honest mediocrity which I dislike in others and detest in myself. Save a few sentences and one or two whole pages where the devil came to my assistance, there is no “go” in the thing, it is flat ; ideas are not interesting and expressions not striking. The verdict is “good, very correct, a good exercise ; let us see the next” ; such is my sincere impression. You can imagine whether I feel inclined to correct it from the opposite point of view ! I think it dull, ordinary, monotonous, and I am told it is brutal, full of peculiarities, paradoxes,

startling ideas, that I must soften it, temper it, change the colours into mere shades ! Perhaps that is true ; I have so often been wrong that I dare no longer think myself in the right ; but I feel so. You know how awkward it is to work against one's intimate conviction ; imagine a poor animal stroking itself the wrong way !

About is finishing his *Voyage en Grèce*, it will be very pretty. Prévost, whom you will remember at school, has just published a *Revue de l'Histoire Universelle*, an excellent book, in good though rather pompous style, temperate, very well composed, and decidedly eloquent.

So we are at war about Beyle ? Well let us sign a compact ; here are the terms of it : tell me if you object to them. I grant you that one writes in order to be understood. Will you grant me that one writes in order to produce a beautiful work ? Well then, which of these two objects is the principal one ? The second one, I consider. Beauty first, before everything else, then clearness. Let the artist try for both merits, but, if he must sacrifice one let him not sacrifice Beauty ; it is better to do well than to be popular. A perfect statue, hidden in a studio, is preferable to an ordinary one exposed to the light of day. You will say that I give no proofs ; that is because such is the very definition of Art.

But perhaps I am inventing an impossible case ? No, for twenty instances prove that one often has to choose between beauty and perspicuity. For one thing, certain sentiments are so exalted or so singular that they are very difficult to understand, and even superior men have to study them for a long time before doing so. There were many clever men in the eighteenth century ; Vol-

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taire, for instance, and Montesquieu. Who among them understood Hamlet? It has been much praised of late. If you have read Goethe's criticism (*Wilhelm Meister*) you know how little of this praise is intelligent. There are no better draughtsmen than Leonardo or Raphael. For instance, is the divine beauty of the Madonnas, of the Christ of the Last Supper, visible at first sight? I conclude that certain works—whether by their own forms or by the nature of their subject—are difficult to understand, though their author cannot be blamed for this difficulty.

Let us apply this to Julien. Julien is Beyle himself; this I could prove by a thousand traits in the novel, by biography, by a dozen anecdotes I have gathered elsewhere. Only he has painted an ugly likeness of himself and has supposed circumstances likely to revolt man against society and to make him consider life as a warfare. Now Beyle is a superior and very original mind, very high above and very far from the ordinary; so that every difficulty is there. A proof that these difficulties were enormous is that Beyle himself was looked upon as an enigma. I know one of his friends, a distinguished man, and I have read the writings of M. Coulon; well, neither of them understands him in the least, and they saw him every day for ten years. Therefore Julien-Beyle should be studied for a long time before he can be understood.

Another excuse is this: Beyle is relating a story. Now a story should note every fact in detail, but show it in its naked form. The author should not interfere, and on every page start a tirade like Balzac. He should disappear. I hate a painter to remain always standing

by the side of his picture; Beyle avoids remarks and comments; this merit produces some obscurity. The reader has to see without explanation the connexions and reactions between such strong and delicate sentiments in characters, so original and so great. If he does not grasp them, should the author be blamed? He is an artist and not a cicerone, and a writer should not be expected to be a commentator. Here is an example—chapter 46: Julien imitates the Creole speech. “Ah! this man is indeed worthy of my love,” thought Mathilde. If an explanation be interposed, the whole thing drags. This bare account, this continual absence of the author, gives to the style an incredible force and rapidity. I conclude that, in order to make it clearer, Julien’s character would have to lose some of its depth and originality, or else dissertations would have to be added, so that either the style of the work or the ideas would be spoilt. I prefer condemning myself to read the book twice.

One word more: a proof that he did think about clearness is his answer to Balzac at the end of the *Chartreuse*: Speaking of the obscurity of Madame Sand’s style, he adds: “If I am not clear, my whole world is reduced to nothing.”

I am obstinate, am I not? but I have read those novels over sixty or eighty times, and I am reading them again. Let us take an arbiter; let him be yourself, but when you have read the book three times.

Remember me to our Mason friend.<sup>1</sup> Do not tell him I am so much in love with Beyle; he would say I have sucked the venom of the nineteenth century; that is

<sup>1</sup> M. de Witt.

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what he always says of me. Tell him as my excuse that I am at present reading *St. Theresa*, in order to acquire a taste for puns and for the four different kinds of prayer.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, June 26, 1854.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—Milne-Edwards has told us nothing yet about Generation. He promises to complete his course in three years, as is the custom, but every year he starts again on Nutrition. Take Longet's *Physiology*, vol. ii; it is an excellent epitome of all that we know already.

I had nine votes to ten at the Academy. It is all owing to M. Nisard, who had voted for me at the Commission, and who had told his brother that my work was good. The consequence is clear; this revulsion comes from above. But Prévost is reading me over again, and I wish to push the whole to a conclusion in order to satisfy my conscience.

Lately I have been rather worse. I intend to start (for St. Sauveur) about the middle of July. To amuse myself, I am reading *St. Theresa*. Happy man, preparing for an examination! Oh! the misery of being obliged to do nothing, to see impassable barriers around me in every direction, the prospect of idling away six long weeks in broiling sunshine, with no amusement but to drink water tasting of rotten eggs!! My God, what a mistake it was to let me come into the world! Where, O Lord, was the need to lodge a thought in a drop of lymph which might just as well have evaporated at once!! *St. Theresa*, translated by d'Andilly, amuses me; there are successive fits of disgust and enthusiasm, such as are experienced by people

who live by their imagination. She began by a protracted nervous disease which used to contract all her limbs. Her book is a commentary of the Leuret, Lélut, and others which I read at the Bibliothèque Nationale. In our times she would have been a George Sand.

You are more than funny with your Prize-day speeches. I really cannot foresee misfortunes so far ahead. You will see in Hachette's paper (*Revue de l'Instruction Publique*) an indication of a collection of such speeches.

I do not doubt that, as you say, your harangue will be golden, and I consent to embellish it by telling you of some tales, anecdotes, and legends. First, there is that of Turenne, who, from emulation, slept on a gun at the age of twelve and acquired rheumatism. Then there is that of Sesostris, who was brought up with seventeen hundred boys born the same day as himself, and who, by emulation, became the greatest conqueror in the world. Finally, there is that of the Babylonian or Indian dogs presented to Alexander, which, by emulation, became so large and so strong that they could knock down a lion or even an elephant. Exhort your scholars to imitate these mastiffs, prove to them that having received from heaven the sacred gift of reason, they should do as well as unreasoning animals; with a few such diamonds in the gold setting of your speech, I will be hanged if you do not dazzle the parents of your pupils.

About his finishing his Hachette (*La Grèce Contemporaine*), he wanted to conclude by advising the Powers to get rid of that figure-head, Otho, and to have the country governed by two Residents, one of them French and the other English. I represented to him the dangers of matrimonial

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divisions, and advised him to give Greece back to the Turks. You see how we dispose of nations.

He has written another little play, witty of course, he could not do otherwise, but in the same style as the first; He is still the same old Edmond.

Good-night my good Ed. It is kind of you to speak evil of the weather and its cause; but it does not cure us. Rain is like life, we despise it, curse it, and submit to it.

*To M. Hatzfeld.*

*Paris, July 2, 1854.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I apologise. I own that I have been terribly lazy. My doctor has prohibited any sort of work; I am a poor dislocated machine, and am going to a water cure in about a fortnight. I have no courage for discussion, especially in writing and at a distance. There is so little in a letter! At any rate I do not feel capable of explaining myself better than I did in the long letter with which I wearied you.<sup>1</sup> I do not even know whether opinions as opposed as yours and mine can ever grow nearer to each other. I cited those writers and landscapes which produce in me the sensation in which I recognize the Beautiful. That sensation is produced in me when the author paints his subject in numerous features, *appropriate to itself only*. It is only on that condition that I forget that I am holding a book, and that I think I see a living man; and you cannot deny that that condition is to be found in nature, since each man and each object possesses a multitude of qualities which are absolutely personal to itself. Hence I conclude that Corneille's *Polyeuctes*,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 36.

*Horace*, etc. . . . are speech-making ideas, whilst *Coriolanus*, *Hotspur*, *Othello*, many of *Balzac's* and *Beyle's* heroes are living men. My whole theory stops there ; I can but say to my adversary : Do you experience that sensation when those conditions are present ? If he says to me " No," I have nothing to say ; our imaginations are made differently ; he sees red when I see blue, and the discussion ends.

Beauty in an object is the property of bringing within us a very agreeable, very exalted and very noble sensation, independent of any interested views ; that sensation is a mere augmentation of our thinking action. But, brains being different, the same sensation is excited in different brains by different causes. A Hebrew or an Arab requires furious metaphors—a Greek, long-winded speeches, etc. One can only do one thing, which is to give the formula of one's own taste, that is to express the necessary and sufficient condition of one's pleasure. You have mine, let me have yours ; here is my hand upon it.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Eaux Bonnes, August 15, 1854.*<sup>1</sup>

: : : I have left *St. Sauveur*, which was doing me no good, and am at the *Eaux Bonnes*, which are equally efficacious. *M. Guéneau de Mussy* is here : he runs down *Philosophy* to me, and I speak evil of *Medicine* to him. This interchange of amenities helps me to pass an hour in three days. The rest of the time, I watch the rain falling, chase the flies, our

<sup>1</sup> During this first stay in the Pyrenees, Taine wrote long descriptive letters to his mother and sisters. They are not included in this book, having been used by himself for his *Voyage aux Pyrénées*.



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persecutors, and read *Faust* and a botany manual ; I have no courage to write anything.

By the bye, remember that you owe me two letters, an answer to this one, and an answer to one which you received at Dijon, sir, and which you treated with a regal contempt. What a difference between now and the old times ! Three years ago I should have written to you and you to me at least six times since I have been away. When I was at the École Normale I had not enough with my school-work, private work, correspondence and our talks, but must needs write a diary ! Now I do without writing, talking or thinking, almost without regret ; I am a barren field, where nothing will grow.

Give me news of Prévost. His resolve is inexplicable, and I have told him so ; but the question cannot be broached without vexing him. It is no use trying to convert him, but we can try to understand him. He is not looking forward to a large income ! With 1,900 or 2,000 francs salary at M. X.'s he will be worse off than he is here, where he has his furniture and no need to spend money on keeping up appearances ; neither can he be hoping for rapid promotion. He says he is not thought well off at the Education Office, and he must feel that his electrical temperament will give shocks to all the inquisitorial country officials. Nor a change of occupation : to lecture according to a programme and under orders, to have to play the martinet in order to obtain silence and industry is far more disagreeable than to give free lessons to well brought up children. I have been thinking about it in vain. Even supposing your conjectures to be right, I cannot see how a stay in the country can be useful to him. In

any case, if he has heard from that man Lesieur, write and let me know:

Did I tell you that I am one of the employés of Hachette & Cie. ? I am going to write 300 pages about the Pyrenees for them. I am taking notes, and when I am in the midst of a November fog I shall find some pleasure in recalling the sunshine and the colour of the mountains. I really did enjoy the few fine days we had; but it rains frequently, and an intimate conversation with a table or a chair has been my only resource. Saint Sauveur was wild enough, Bonnes is horribly civilized; it swarms with well dressed women, horses, grooms, gentlemen, beggars and street musicians. There are 200 houses and 200 inns or hotels, with desperately regular lines of windows, no smell but that of cooking, and no sound but that of pianos. I bear this last with resignation, having no doubt inflicted similar sufferings on others.

If you meet any of our École friends, give them my love, and write me all the news you can. Remember that I am alone, dumb, ill, incurably ill, and have pity on your old Chief.

*To Cornélis de Witt.*

*October 9, 1854.*

: : : How are you, dear friend ? Since I have been ill I always imagine that everybody else is or will be, and when a man speaks at all loud I tremble for his throat. Mine is better, and, if I may believe the doctors—an untrustworthy race—it will be better still in a month, for the waters take some time to have their effect. Whilst you were browsing in your blissful Norman pastures, I have been

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living the life of a Pythagorean goat ; I have become the cleverest climber of the Pyrenean fauna, also the most dumb. I have seen a profusion of red, grey, black or yellow rocks ; I have become the friend of lizards and goats, and have been studying the habits of pink and black pigs. Happy creatures, four-footed epicureans, your careless contentment shames humanity, and I agree with Montaigne's goose, who claimed to be the centre of creation. The result of these friendships and peregrinations will be a little book on the Pyrenees which Hachette has asked me to write. I shall go over this journey again in my memory ; and shall enjoy this mental travelling better than the other :

When are you coming back ? I fancy I wrote a short letter to Guillaume in August, but he must have been travelling in Brittany and did not answer, so that it is now three months since I had any news of you. I shall come and see you on your return, and shall ask M. Guizot for the advice and corrections that Guillaume led me to hope for. My poor fallen offspring shall be dressed in new clothes and I shall straighten it up as best I can. Wish it good luck, and do not withdraw from its parent your old school friendship ; I can ask for nothing better for him.

*To Madame Letorsay.*<sup>1</sup>

*October, 1854.*

I am making up descriptions, dialogues, fairy tales and legends of the Pyrenees, fantastic and diabolical, for my Hachette book.<sup>2</sup> I feel as if my mind were masquerading ;

<sup>1</sup> His elder sister.

<sup>2</sup> *Voyage aux Pyrénées.*

sometimes the disguise is amusing, but as a rule it makes my head ache, and I sit in my room doing very little work; I am not really well again. My travels, seen through my memory, seem quite beautiful. It is thus with all things; distance makes them agreeable; they are pleasing but in the past or in the future. In the present, they are wearisome, they have to be far away in order to be desired. I always see life with the same eyes, through dark spectacles, and yet a beautiful landscape or a good book is a very great delight! When my head is not aching, delicious sensations come back to me in crowds, not so much of the mountains themselves—they are only grand in one or two places—but of a stream, a sunlight effect, a wayside farm or distant steeple; I am a landscape painter, though unknown to the public!

This wretched book is giving me a great deal of trouble. I have never written anything but dialectics; I am accustomed to abstractions only, and now have to come out of myself, to modify the workings of my mind and to learn descriptive style! Another misfortune is the monotony of that kind of thing; description following upon description wearies me at the end of ten pages, and I have to write 300! I am obliged to look for incidents and to put them in as best I can in order to be readable. My friend About is more fortunate than I am: his style of writing has a marketable value. He is a society man, and can gossip so as to please any reader. My style only suits three or four silent lovers of ideas, scattered sparsely through France and Germany. : : : I am not a society man, and I feel myself every day becoming more and more of a bear. Paris I like, because there one is free to live as a bear,

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without depending on public opinion and without dragging along one's reputation like a tin can fastened to a cat's tail. I do pity you with all your society worries ; unless one can live alone in a hole, one must expect to be bitten by the mass of harmful and imbecile human pests which swarm in country towns especially. Yet I believe one can get used to anything. We are all Werthers at twenty, at thirty we are reconciled to life ; it is like sitting in a stage coach, at first one feels cramped and uncomfortably crowded ; then one begins to settle down and to feel better. The worst of it is that one has to get out just as things had become bearable.

*To Cornélie de Witt.*

*Paris, November 1, 1854.*

MY DEAR DE WITT,—So you too are now plunged in the literary profession ! But your work, my dear fellow, lies in action and in politics ; I congratulate you on your fine subject. Why not begin earlier ? Nothing is more admirable than the beginnings of the Reformation in France, Jeanne d'Albret, Coligny, d'Aubigné, La Noue, all the proud Calvinist nobles. It is an epoch of martyrs, heroes and bandits, and it is in the sixteenth century, of all times the most full of life, power and originality. I read last year many memoirs and stories of that time, and, I can assure you, nothing is more dramatic ; it is the very finest subject for a historian. They were playing for heavy stakes ; they wanted to win France ; after the Edict of Nantes they merely had to live. You will do away with the finest chapter in your book if you make an introduction of this one. Remember that those characters are not really

known; M. Dumas' accursed novels have disfigured them in the mind of the public; the facts may be known, but the souls are not, and the sentiments which you should interpret are of the grandest description, and most remote from us. I implore you, in the name of your pleasure, of your success and of History; to read the actions of those men, and I am sure you will include them in your book.

I presume that you have some curious documents on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes? M. Depping has just published a volume which contains a great many, some of them so remarkable, I am told, that the Government would forbid the publication if they were known.

As to the dogma, it seems to me to be part of the morals. Calvin's terrible theology fashioned souls like that of Jeanne d'Albret. Theories on Grace are very interesting; few books gave me more pleasure than St. Augustine's *Predestination*. Ideas lie at the root of passions, and therefore of actions. Should you not also inform Catholic Frenchmen that Jarrige answered Bossuet very well, that the history of the Variations might be called up against our Church, and that, from one point of view, there is as much stability and as fixed a dogma in Protestantism as in Catholicism?

You may say what you like, you will become a theologian and a romancer, a brother of St. Paul and Walter Scott. Such are the results of cultivating History; its charming gardens are the favourite resort of noble society, as Scribe (another theologian) would have it.

As for me, old fellow, I continue to squeeze descriptions out of my sick brain; I shall await your return and promised assistance to expurgate *Livy*. My love to

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Guillaume, to you and to Chambolle if he is still at the Val-Richer.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, November 5, 1854.*

DEAR ED.;—Let us talk of science, if only for the sake of the change. Though I live in Paris, it is the same with me as with you, two years since I have heard or ventured to speak a word about Philosophy. My former masters have given up originating anything, and when I see them I owe them at least enough courtesy not to contradict them. Our friends are occupied with business ; I occasionally get a word with them on literary subjects, and that is all. As to general ideas, abstract stories or high speculations, no one will have anything to do with them ; I no longer feel the wish to speak of them, or indeed to speak at all ! A whole year's silence has made me lose the habit of talking. You are my last hope ; if any one can revive me, you can, and even you will have a great deal of trouble. I am up to my neck in money difficulties ; I am racing like a hare after lessons which are not to be had ; my pupils of last year are still travelling. My *Voyage aux Pyrénées* makes my head ache ; I am too literary not to appreciate what is really good, and too devoid of talent to write anything good myself ; I am born to analyse and classify, and I am turning out imaginative work at so much a yard ; I should do better to cobble shoes. Add to all this that all my people are ill and that I am no better. Look after your health, old man ! when once it is gone no one knows when it will come back. Poor M. Guéneau has returned, and is dragging himself along. I envy you your *Marcus Aurelius* ;

he must provide you with consolation and conversation.

Shall we talk about psychology ? I always find myself coming back to it ; therein lie real, practical conclusions : the mathematical construction and inevitable workings of the human machine, the necessity of a brain to think with ; the absolute impossibility of a pure Intelligence such as the God of the Christians for instance—and especially the domination of Ideas over Passions. I should like to make a common stock of your ideas and mine on that point. I have recast the classifications I made at the École ; I now see new points of view and new questions.

Take a given passion or natural inclination, such as avarice, benevolence, ambition, and tendency to mysticism, in fact, all the inclinations, or all Gall's "primitive faculties." This passion is the presence or habitual predominance of a certain class of ideas which cause, in the individual in question, a pleasure greater than any other, and consequently master and direct his life. I want to determine what is the original modification of the intellectual faculties which gives this bent to the active faculties.

For instance, Vanity, or the habit of thinking of other people's opinion. Why should an individual or a nation have, naturally, and independently of Education, an inclination to look outside of self and an impossibility to see or judge of self otherwise than by gazing into the eyes of others ? Why were the eyes of such an individual's soul turned outwards instead of inwards ?

I do not ask what is the cerebral cause, the arrangement of fibres, the chemical proportions ; those will never be known, and, if they were, I should not care. What I want



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is the intellectual cause, that is, the irreducible and primitive mode of thought on which this inborn habit depends.

Could it be a cause such as the following? Take a Frenchman: he certainly differs from other races in the lightness and vivacity of his conceptions, which fly away as soon as they are born; his thought is like lightning when compared to English or German thought. That is why he must have a mirror in which to fix objects when he wishes to know them; he looks at them in the thought of another, because he cannot gaze at them long enough in his own. Being incapable of the concentrated attention which forms stable and personal opinions, he has no personal opinions, but borrows those of the public. Attention and concentration produce Pride, Firmness, Egoism, Tenacity, Prudence, the spirit of business, the English spirit. The lack of attention and concentration produces Sociability, Vanity, Inconstancy, Sympathy, Temerity, the spirit of conversation, the French spirit. But what produces instability and lightness of conception? I should like to go back in this way until the point when physiological and chemical explanations begin, and then prove that nothing is left but those explanations.

That being done, a general table could be drawn up of inclinations reduced to their causes, determining which of them exclude and which implicate each other; thus one could see which are possible and which impossible characters, and Moral Dynamics would follow.

If Hachette accepts my book on Shakespeare, I shall plunge into those questions. Have you anything to tell me about them? What do you think of this research? You see that it is quite outside our former classifications and the

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general principles which we borrowed from Spinoza. It is a new research which might be called "A Study of the Primary Causes of innate Passions, their affinities and incompatibilities."

Do let us converse and forget that we are but common labourers.

*To M. Hatzfeld.*

*Paris, December 16, 1854.*

MY DEAR SIR,—What did you think of me for breaking off the discussion to which you so kindly invited me? You probably guessed at the right reason, which was that I was ill, weary and disgusted, and that my limbs rather than my brain required exercise. Such was indeed the case; I have been spending three months in the Pyrenees in complete idleness, trying to nurse my sick brain and to cure my throat. It is better, but I shall have to go there again next year. Do try never to be ill; you do not suffer from this unfortunate habit, and I hope you have not contracted it lately.

What I had written to you still seems to me to be true. The sensation of the Beautiful, like every other sensation, is above discussion; it is a fact, and all that each of us can do is to try and find a formula for it. Certain causes produce it within you, certain others within me; if the same object produces it within us both, it only means that our two minds are alike on that point. All we can conclude, I think, is that your sensation of Beauty is nearest to the seventeenth century and mine to the nineteenth. You will find in a little book by a man you do not like, Stendhal, two chapters on the Ideal of the Beautiful in

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Painting which, to my thinking, place this opinion beyond doubt. As those two chapters are extremely witty, you will, by reading them, hear all my reasons much better expressed than I could write them in this letter.

Have you altered your Academy memoir? I am correcting mine according to the suggestions of the members of the Commission, and shall make one more attempt to charm Fortune. I have written a little book of Pyrenean landscapes for Hachette; I am still writing down psychological observations, and am looking out for pupils, M. de X. not having returned from the country; such is my list of occupations. What is yours? M. Franck tells me that Faculty posts are only fit for fat monks; I can well believe that yours seems so to you, who are accustomed to work so much and so rapidly, and it leads me to hope that we shall profit by your hours of leisure and that I shall soon have the great pleasure of reading some of your work.

People here talk of nothing but the war. I never hear a word about Philosophy, Science, and very seldom about Literature. Have letters found a refuge in Grenoble? I hope they have for your sake and for their own, and trust that you will tell me so one day when you happen to come across a sheet of note-paper.

Believe, my dear Sir, in your first pupil's feelings of devotion and long friendship. I forget nothing of it all, neither will you, I trust!

## CHAPTER II

1855-1856

First Critical and Historical Essays—First Studies on English Literature—First Articles on French Philosophers—Publication of Early Works—*Travels in the Pyrenees* (1855)—*Essay on Titus Livius* (1856)—*French Philosophers of the Nineteenth Century* (1857)—Correspondence

M. TAINÉ was still very far from well when he returned from his first stay in the Pyrenees ; private lessons were hard to find and extremely trying for his weak larynx. Fortunately a market was now assured for his literary work through his recently established relations with MM. Hachette, and he was able by degrees to give up teaching altogether. His first article in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique* came out on February 1, 1855 ; it was an essay on *Les Caractères de la Bruyère*, and was afterwards reprinted in the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, as also were subsequent articles on Michelet's *La Renaissance*, *La Réforme*, and *l'Oiseau*, *Les Jeunes Gens*

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*de Platon* (a development of his Latin thesis), M. Guizot's *Histoire de la Révolution d'Angleterre*, and Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Three articles on Macaulay's *Critical and Historical Essays* and *History of England* marked Taine's first step in his study of English literature; they were published in the first edition of the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, and afterwards formed chapter iii. of the last volume of the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. Other papers on M. Landonnière's *Histoire de la Floride* (Feb. 1855), Cornélis de Witt's *Histoire de Washington* (April 1855), Rochefoucauld's *Maximes Morales* (April 1855), Edmond About's *Tolla* (May 1855), and Guillaume Guizot's *Ménandre* (May 1855), were not republished, and are only to be found in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*. This journal provided an excellent opening for young writers; Quicherat, Sainte Beuve, Victor Duruy, Nisard, Gérusez, etc., were amongst its habitual contributors, and many of Taine's schoolfellows made their first appearance in its hospitable pages. Prévost Paradol, About, Gréard, Caro, Challemel-Lacour, E. Bersot, Gustave Merlet, Hippolyte, Rigault, J. J. Weiss, E. de Suckau and Édouard Hervé, all of them either preceded or followed him on this favourable ground, finding there what was practically an introduction to more exclusive fields. Thus Taine's article on Jean Reynaud's *Ciel et Terre* was published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in August 1855, and, a year later, his lifelong series of contributions to the *Journal des Débats* were inaugurated by a paper on the *Mémoires du duc de St. Simon*, and another on Flécher's *Grands Jours d'Auvergne*; these articles were reprinted later in the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*.

These somewhat scattered productions hardly counted for anything in Hippolyte Taine's laborious life; he finished his *Voyage aux Eaux des Pyrénées* in the winter of 1854, and sent to the Académie his *Essai sur Tite-Live*, remodelled in accordance with academical desiderata. Freed from these two burdens, he embarked on two series of studies, *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise* and *Les Philosophes Français du XIXème Siècle*, the first of which was destined to occupy several years of his life. We have seen that the paper on Macaulay was written at the beginning of 1855; Taine, at that time, only thought of writing a psychological study on Shakespeare, with the help of every document capable of throwing some light on the dominant characteristics of the powerful race which had given birth to the poet. His researches led him further than he had originally intended, and, by January 1856 he had conceived the general plan of the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*; we find it announced in a footnote to an article on *Anglo-Saxons*, which appeared in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique* in January 1856; Soon after this some further articles appeared on *Charles Dickens, son talent et ses Œuvres*, on *L'Esprit Français importé en Angleterre*, on *Geoffrey Chaucer*, and finally on *Shakespeare*, which he primarily intended for his principal subject. Finally, at the end of 1856, he published some articles on *Les Causes de la Poésie Anglaise au XVIème Siècle*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Ben Jonson* and *Spenser*. These and all the above-mentioned were incorporated into the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*.

But Literature could not lead him altogether away from Philosophy, and he threw himself back into his favourite

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subject with all the eagerness of his critic's nature. The first article on *Philosophes du XIXème Siècle*, entitled *La Romiguière, Leçons de Philosophie*, appeared in June 1855, in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*. It was very soon followed by the celebrated work on *M. Cousin*, then by others on *Royer-Collard*, *Maine de Biran*, *Jouffroy*, and two concluding articles on *Le Succès de l'Eclectisme*, which, like the preceding, formed (with slightly modified titles) chapters of the *Philosophes Classiques*.

These articles produced a great sensation in the philosophical and literary world. Those independent thinkers who had long groaned under the yoke of official philosophy gladly applauded M. Taine's vigorous attacks. M. Vacherot did not hesitate to recognize himself in the "M. Paul" of the later studies. He wrote to Taine in October: "I have a little of everything that your generous pen has attributed to me; perhaps I may yet be more worthy of the honour you have done me when I have published the book I hope to finish this winter. And yet, apart from doctrine, I shall always consider myself unworthy of holding a place in the gallery of illustrious men whom your clear and sagacious criticism might have treated less rigorously. I should say that you are a little hard on Maine de Biran and Jouffroy, whose analyses seem to me to have a greater value than that which you attribute to them: ; . .

"Whoever is M. Pierre? I am very curious to know. As to you, my dear Taine, if you were less partial to your master and friend, I should say that you would represent, in the coming philosophical era; both M. Pierre and M. Paul, that is to say, that you alone, with the extent and

accuracy of your knowledge, are capable of analysis and synthesis. . . :

“ You will surely publish your articles in a little book ? They have made a sensation, and they will gain by being gathered together. Be assured that they answer to a need and to a new requirement of the modern mind. No one will have anything to do nowadays with literary philosophy . . . It is through science only that we shall conquer scientists.”

The first edition of this volume appeared in January 1857, and was preceded by a short Introduction, as follows : “ Several contemporary philosophers do not figure in this book, which is only intended to include those whose life is over and whose work is complete. It was thought better not to interrupt men who are now speaking, speaking very well in some cases, and to wait before describing their thought until they had stated it in its entirety. In the meanwhile they are listened to with delight, and it is hoped that no one will mistake this mark of respect for a sign of indifference or forgetfulness.”

This Introduction was omitted in the second edition (1860), and a preface added. Finally, the work was revised in 1868, and its title changed for that of *Philosophes Classiques du XIXème Siècle en France*.

Critics hungrily seized on the book as soon as it was published ; Vapereau, Cournault, Gustave Planche, Caro, Schérer, and many others after them, discussed the young writer's ideas from divers points of view, and, by their criticisms as well as by their praise, exalted him to the rank of leader of the new school of thought. Finally, Sainte Beuve consecrated his success by two great articles in the



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*Moniteur* (March 1857), in which he called the attention of the public not only to the *Philosophes*, but to the thesis on La Fontaine's Fables, to the Pyrenean travels, the essay on Livy, and the various articles of literary history and criticism which we have enumerated. He, too, reproached Taine with his severity towards Maine de Biran and Jouffroy; he seems to have accepted the attacks on M. Cousin more easily.

Many people have seen in Taine's biting criticisms of Eclectic Philosophy some retaliation against his adversaries and revenge for a painful past. To attribute to such motives the frank and sharp expression of his opinions is to mistake his character and the example of his whole life. At the most, the persecutions of which he had been the object may have released him from any scruples towards masters who treated their doctrine as an intangible dogma, and who converted the great Alma Mater into an Inquisition Tribunal. He made, however, some concessions to his friends in the subsequent editions of the book, and the tone of certain passages was considerably softened.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, January 1855.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—You deserve many reproaches; you really ought to have come to see me on New Year's Day. I could not go to you; I was ill. What with neuralgia, a swollen cheek, and some enormous boils on my neck, I have been an absolute invalid for a month. I am studying the influence of the body over the mind, my dear fellow, and it has come to this—that I am now asking myself what is the use of those sensitive but non-sensory

nerves, so abundantly scattered in our machine, only to make us suffer uselessly for the greater glory of God ? As an amusement, I have been writing a big article for Hachette's journal, which you will see on Thursday or Friday. I shall write a few of these, so as to keep that particular outlet open to me. When my poor machine is a little less shaky I will go and knock at the door of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* with two articles and barely a grain of hope. I am trying every chance, were it only the better to persuade myself that it is all in vain, and that I had better poke my fire and manufacture *bacheliers*<sup>1</sup> when I find the right material. A vision of a book worth writing has been flitting before my eyes ; I am sorry for it : those momentary delusions awaken the passionate animal which I believed to be crushed or asleep, and I afterwards fall back into reality with greater bitterness. Then I have to cool myself down with ice-cold arguments. I hope, with time, to succeed in killing my old self and only preserving the machine. I treat myself every morning with the following sentence : " A cod-fish contains four million eggs, two hundred of which reach the adult stage." It is natural that I should be one of the three million nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand eight hundred others ! This phrase, properly applied and sufficiently soaked in a Spinoza infusion, helps one to become a reasonable and worthy beast in an overcoat, a black tie and spectacles, working as regularly as a mill-horse, generally esteemed, useful to society, and perfectly worthy of being a navvy or a Minister.

Dear Ed., now that you are free, *Marcus Aurelius*

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. p. 18, note.

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will come to the surface again ; I envy you the pleasure of writing in French on such a subject ; the sensation of pure sublimity is so rare that it does not occur once a year. Do not be downcast by your profession ; you will certainly reach the Faculties. Nourrisson has already done so,—at Clermont, I think,—and so have many others. Your generation is being promoted, you only have to acquire more degrees, look like a good boy and do your work innocently. The tide is bearing you up, and, when you have reached this goal, you will enjoy, if not a philosopher's pleasure, at least the artistic pleasure of delivering well-prepared lectures in a finished manner. If you should do a little more psychology, do not forget me. In the intervals between my attacks of neuralgia, I have been amusing myself by analyzing the pleasant or disagreeable feelings occasioned by form, by sound, or by a combination of sounds, and I have come upon several facts which I did not suspect before. I am too near the end of my notepaper to write about it. I will only tell you that the point which seems to me most remarkable is the difference between the manner in which an artist experiences pleasure by *feeling* the harmony of form and that in which a philosopher experiences the same pleasure by *understanding* this harmony. It seems to me, for instance, that when I *feel* a piece of music it does not mean that I perceive the law which links the notes together, but that I experience a tendency to produce the notes in a given systematic order, cerebral images having reciprocal affinities and attractions corresponding to affinities of form and of exterior sounds—the satisfaction of which tendency is a pleasure. This kind of faculty is an instinct

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like that of birds and that of that mad idiot whom Esquirol mentions, who understood Lizst's playing.

All this is enigmatical and too short; you must lay the blame on my paper, which leaves me no room.

*David Copperfield* is full of imagination.—I am reading some sixteenth century memoirs.

*To Édouard de Suckau,*

*Paris, May 2, 1855.*

. . . My virtues consist chiefly in a great deal of patience; not having any to start with, I am manufacturing some. The Académie is full of business and about to present a protest to His Majesty. My corrected Essay is languishing in a drawer, and I do not know when it will come out of it; I dare not go to Buloz for very shame; I do not know whether he will yet take my article; in fact I am at a standstill. I am working hard at Anglo-Saxons and Norman-Saxons—quite the meanest knaves I have ever come across; monks, translating homilies into doggerel. Shakespeare revives me a little. I am beginning to see the outlines, and to emerge from the mud-heap of details; but it is an immense labour, and practically unremunerative: I should starve if it were not for a pupil I have.

I am attending at the Salpêtrière a course of lectures on lunatics (by M. Baillarger) with which I am delighted; I write them out on the spot, and will let you have them next time you come up. Here is one curious fact, amongst others. It appears, from some measurements taken by M. Lélut, that the brain of an idiot differs on an average from a healthy one by a depression, not of the anterior but of the posterior part contained under the occipital,

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and that the curve which measures this region of the head is twenty-one millimetres smaller in an idiot than in a healthy man. We are allowed to see the lunatics one by one, and I write down their answers. I have just come away from a magnetism *séance*, where I have seen a few curious examples of convulsions, contractions, shiverings, and power exerted directly on the limbs ; but the good Baron Dupotet (the magnetiser) speaks of communications with the inhabitants of the stars, and the idea disgusts me.

By the bye, do not forget that you have promised to ask Mr. Spiers or Mr. Fleming which is the best *History of English Literature*. Your father had the extreme kindness to bring me Lingard, and I have been rude enough not to go and thank him at once. Please make my apologies to him: I am very much absorbed, spending my days in the library and my evenings in reading books borrowed from there.

About has an article on Guillaume Guizot in this month's *Revue Contemporaine*. I shall have one on Thursday week in Hachette's Journal. Prévost is well ; I questioned him indirectly, and he told me he was satisfied.

Buy Stendhal's two volumes of *Correspondence*. They are full of admirable ideas and deep psychology. Amongst others see the analysis of a virtuous action. A certain Lieutenant Louaut, who, though suffering from rheumatism, jumps into a river in mid-winter after some fool who was drowning. Then there are a crowd of ideas on Italy and England, on all the writers of 1820 ; at every page a true paradox which blinds the public or makes it howl. That man is divine, he is as witty as Voltaire. No one has

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originated so much that is new as he has. But he did not write to be read, and he never will be read:

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, May 25, 1855.*

I am writing down the Salpêtrière course, and especially the lunatics' answers. One of them, a native of the neighbourhood of Domrémy, exactly reproduces Joan of Arc's beginnings. She has walked to Paris twice to save France from the foreign powers; she wants to go to Sebastopol; she prays to God loudly and enthusiastically. I will let you read her answers when cross-examined. She has a brother who is a Cretin. This would make an interesting subject for a book. Take all modern inspired sects, Quakers, Cévennes prophets, American visionaries, in fact all those of whom we have authentic records, compare their mental state point for point with that of the Salpêtrière and Bicêtre lunatics, and rigorously conclude as to the mental state of founders of religions. Hallucinations and spiritual ecstasy were a normal condition during the three first centuries after Jesus Christ. It seems to me that madness has played a very important part in this world. *À propos* of Shakespeare, I have just been reading documents on mediæval wizards. We, in these times of common sense cannot imagine anything like the absurdity of our predecessors. My physiological studies are teaching me History. : : : I have the prize for the Essay on Titus-Livius. It is not yet officially announced, but a member of the Academy tells me that the ballot has taken place, and that my name has been gloriously proclaimed before the great Forty. I will now start prudent negotiations

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for the sale of the book. See on what I found my hopes ! The bookseller might retail it as a suitable work for school prizes ! Is not that a flattering idea !

My English literature is killing me. It is simply immense. I have to read enormously in order to avoid being superficial or inaccurate.

I doubt whether I can get into the *Revue des Deux Mondes* ; they are regular tyrants. " This sentence is too flattering, that other is too severe. Here you touch upon Religion, the tone of this paragraph would alarm Philosophy, etc., etc." They would like me to be a mere pen in their hands. I corrected *Jean Reynaud*, as they suggested ; now they want further alterations ! I shall send them no more papers save on ancient subjects, which they will probably refuse. I shall look for something elsewhere.

On Thursday week, you will see in Hachette's *Revue* an article on La Romiguière. It is my first hit at M. Cousin, a very gentle and harmless hit ; I do not want to grieve M. Simon.

It is very difficult to make any headway in this sort of work, for one comes at every step across the toes of some philosopher ! it is unpleasant to tread on them, until one gets used to it, especially when they cry out. Tell me what to do, my gentle Teuton !

*To his Mother and Sister.*

*Eaux Bonnes, July 26, 1855.*

I arrived at two o'clock. Last night I slept at Pau, the rest of the time was spent in the coach, making two whole days' travelling. I am a little tired, but otherwise well. There was no room here ; the Empress has just

left, and I was offered some attics on the fourth floor, vacated by her couriers. At last I found a small room on the third floor, with plenty of air and very little noise, so that everything is for the best in the best of worlds. I will now resume my long walks and short readings, listen to my table companions and gaze on the sky.

Nothing interesting happened during the journey ; but I always enjoy the landscape. Amongst other things I saw two splendid sky effects. Soon after Tours, an immense block of black marble, with dull blue lights and a silver fringe, was stretched right across the horizon against the tender azure of the western sky. When we neared Libourne, at sunset, the mass was broken up into a thousand fragments, orange, red gold, or purple flakes, beautiful copper-coloured groups, which stood out with extraordinary relief against the pale and smiling background, like a thick and capricious embroidery worked on a fine and delicately shaded silk tissue. Those blissful sunset clouds seem to float in the air and to rejoice, like birds dipping their wing in the light. They lie motionless in the still air : their outline is so clear, and their form so full of life, that they seem like a long flight of rose-coloured flamingoes lingering by the sky to gaze once more on their beloved sun before he sinks into the dark and steaming air.

I find that, following Méry's axiom, I had very accurately described the Landes without having seen them. Great forests of pine trees, not very tall, with bare trunks and thick heads, which have allowed no other trees or bushes to live around them, glimpses of sunshine traversing their monotonous colonnade. Then infinite plains, as flat as the sea, grown over with ferns and marshy plants, and



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dotted here and there by a few coarse-haired sheep and a shepherd on tall stilts. The line of the horizon is smooth and curved, without a single irregularity ; the sky rests on the plain like a smooth-edged cup with a perfect brim. The railway has been dug out and laid in the sand ; you cannot go beyond the rails : your feet would sink ! There are no inhabitants, no signs of cultivation ; the only vestige of man is the long white cut on the pine trees, which are thus wounded every year for the sake of their gum. The railway stations seem like sentinels lost in the wilderness. There is no running water ; a few artificial streams in recently hollowed beds try to flow down the very slight incline which has been made for them. There is no more singular contrast than that between the fiery machine, carrying men and their thoughts, and this dead land, only inhabited by pine trees and furze bushes.

From Dax to Pau the country is charming, especially in the valley between Orthez and Pau. A long swelling line of low, rounded hills marks the last wave of the great upheaval out of which the mountains arose, their beautiful serpentine form softly outlined in green pastures and ripening cornfields. The hollows are of the most divine green ; they broaden out and narrow again in such easy and harmonious curves that I have never seen anything more beautiful. There are some red barley-fields of a magnificent splendour ; the forest of upstanding, bristling ears forms a tangle, hollowed out by the wind in red-gold furrows ; the whole land seems to live, animated by the unrolling maze of hills. There is nothing like it in our Ardennes.

I am beginning to understand what colour means, and

shall end by being less unworthy of my artist sister. Listen to this explanation, my dear Virginie : I have often wondered, being but a Philistine, why Titian, Veronese or Delacroix should be so much praised for some bit of colour, redder or blacker than nature ; it seemed an easy thing to me, after painting a picture, to brush it over with a dark varnish ; and I used to think that with a two-franc brush and thirty centimes' worth of varnish it was a cheap thing to be a great painter. Now, after looking this afternoon at a mountain and the sun setting behind it, I discover that the living aspect, which pleases me so much in its long broken line, is due to the intensity of its dark colour. It is precisely because this darkness is extreme and still more intensified by standing against the soft blue of the sunlit sky, that the rocky mass *exists*. It emerges from the ordinary, commonplace appearance and assumes a threatening aspect ; it seems to me invincible and crushing ; it stands amidst that crowd of colourless mounds like a man swayed with passionate emotions amidst a circle of indifferent onlookers. Colour, therefore, represents *passion* in inanimate objects ; its depth measures in each object intensity of Soul and of Being, besides giving pleasure by its felicitous combinations, it disturbs the mind by its contrasts ; the opposition of tints produces tragedies, not bouquets.

These commonplaces that I am now repeating are a corner of an idea in which I make a little progress every year, and which I shall end by mastering, i.e. that inanimate objects have a life of their own. I have been brought up in the exclusive study of ideas and sentiments, in pure psychology, I have not had that education of the

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senses which is necessary to artists, and which furnishes the interpretation of the outer world. I am beginning to understand that every object, every shape, every combination of lines, every particular line, is an indivisible being, and that each curve and each angle of a figure could be psychologically noted by a sentiment or a passion. Joy of different kinds appears to me in the fat roundness of the stupid mathematical circle, the elegant simplicity of an elliptical oval, and the voluptuous curves of a sinuous, irregular line ; and suffering in the strained attitudes of overhanging rocks, the jagged edges of a distant mountain range, or the bleeding crevasses with their walls of smooth rock.

I understand from all this what the sight of nature must mean for an artist, such as Doré, for instance ; it is evident that all these shapes must seem to him to be ready to move, and that he must feel inclined to applaud or insult a house or a tree, to weep at the sight of a black and twisted creeping vine as he would on seeing a prone and suffering human being, a wounded and helpless old man ; he must wish to shout for joy at the sight of the luminous dusts of the air dancing across the warm shadow of an open door in a white wall. In a word, I can understand enough to conclude that I was born a fool and that I shall remain one. : : .

*To Guillaume Guizot.*

*Les Eaux Bonnes, August 5, 1855.*

Good morning, dear Guillaume ; how are you ? I am afraid I have nothing newer or more interesting to say to you. To describe blue skies and pink clouds would be

treating you like the public, and pushing literary cruelty too far. To describe my travelling companions would be worse, besides trespassing on Henri Monnier's ground. To enumerate the glasses of water I drink, the chickens I carve, and the excursions I intend doing would cause you to yawn horribly, and I must have pity on your jaws. I hardly dare to send you a dissertation on the chemistry and lunacy courses I attended this winter, which have been running in my brain throughout the two days' journey. That would only do for a rainy day; even then it would be adding rain to rain, I am afraid. So what the dickens shall I talk to you about? Shall we say politics? Four days ago, on the issue of the first loan, there was a *queue* at the doors of the *mairies* from eight o'clock in the evening! People brought chairs and spent the night there in order to arrive first at the offices the next day. I saw those *queues*; most of the people were poor workmen, more or less ragged; let us suppose (though very improbable) that they had come on their own account, in order to obtain an allotment of ten francs of Government annuities and 200 francs of capital; by selling their coupon the next day, at the market price, they will make a maximum profit of four francs. Is the hope of four francs enough to warrant spending a whole night and half a day out, doing the work of a stockbroker and running the risk of being left out if there are too many subscribers? Now, suppose they had come for others. Would those poor devils be entrusted with the ten per cent. of the capital which has to be paid in order to obtain a coupon? I leave this dilemma to your sagacity. Is it some imitation on a large scale of the Barnum system? If

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it is so, the American plant has richly bloomed and prospered in French soil.

Now for a little Art, if you please. A painter friend of mine, on his return from a first visit to the Exhibition of Fine Arts, tells me that the Salon is but a long wail of sorrow and powerlessness. According to him, the kind of imagination which is necessary to painting has altogether disappeared. Some people are attempting to recover it by imitating masters like M. Ingres ; others, like Delacroix, attempt to replace it by poetical imagination. My friend declares that he sees plenty of musicians, humorists, historians, elegy-writers, rational or systematical thinkers, but no painters ; I believe the reason of what he means is this : for the last two hundred years, a formidable quantity of abstract ideas, general formulæ, and psychological analyses has been accumulating in men's brains. Read the life of Benvenuto Cellini, for instance, or that of Michael Angelo, or those of the Flemish painters, and you will see the contrast between their minds and ours. The true painter's imagination consists in the inward possession of a sort of canvas, upon which landscapes, figures, or any other subjects appear instantaneously, with all their details and colouring ; for instance the word " palace " immediately brings a vision of the edifice with its colonnades, porticoes, window ornaments, effects of light and shade, etc. . . . This vision is involuntarily followed by another, and so on. Now place a man with a brain of this kind under the influence of our education : we will teach him to analyse his impressions, to cut up, bit by bit, the pictures which appeared to him, to note in exact words the different emotions caused by each of them, to go back to the

abstract formula which classifies emotions and explains them—in a word, to tear up the inner canvas which made a painter of him. Michael Angelo tried to write a book on Statuary and failed; he did not know how to analyse his ideas. Compare Martyn's Last Judgment with his. Martyn starts from an abstract religious idea: the great unknown God, lost in the Infinite, with myriads of damned or blessed souls, in a boundless plain lit up by streaks of flaming light. His picture is but the rendering of an idea, of a psychological formula, a general phrase heard in a sermon, probably something like this: "Amidst thunder and lightning, Jehovah, surrounded by the multitude of the angel host, will come and separate the elect from the innumerable race of the damned." Here you see the predominance of modern psychological education.

Now compare with this Sigalon's copy, or, rather, think of the original, which you have seen, you fortunate man! The foundation of Michael Angelo's mind is an incessant vision of the human frame. Whilst we were studying books, he was studying form as a child; he lived with a sculptor at whose house he witnessed masquerades: he spent his days at the Medici collection of antiques; in the winter he modelled snow figures; his love for muscle led him to study anatomy for twelve years, dissecting corpse after corpse. His Last Judgment, therefore, corresponds in no wise with our idea of such a scene. His Christ is so real, so powerfully built, and so earthly, that we could wish no better for a street porter. There is nothing indefinite or vague in his backgrounds. He has merely wished to draw a mass of terrible and mighty forms; the wrath and

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terror which he experienced whilst evolving his picture only finds an expression in strained muscles and convulsed faces.

. . . I hear at dinner the most complete dissertations on medicines and physicians ; you might be in M. Purgon's<sup>1</sup> consulting-room. There are some amusing and typical incidents ; for instance, I have met here the "Chevalier de Beauvoisis." Now, do not think that I quote this name in order to renew our former disputes. Peace be with Beyle and between you and me ! Some one who has lately read *Julien* tells me that it is the most unreal, immoral, misanthropical and faith-destroying book ; some one, too, who has lived a great deal and who is extremely clever. My admirations are thrown into my face like curses.

Good-bye, dear Brittany tourist ; come back to me with long hair, sabots and dirty hands, and tell me if civilization is really worth any more than barbarism. A Spaniard with six sous in his pocket refuses proffered work and goes to dance, drink, and make love ; a rich Englishman nurses his spleen in the steaming mist of the Eaux Bonnes. Which would you rather be ? Is a Breton happier than a Parisian ?

I hope to see you soon ; whether I am cured or not, I will come and shake hands with you and with Cornélis.

*To Guillaume Guizot.*

*Paris, October 19, 1855.*

"Madam, a removal, philosophy, M. Cousin, M. Hachette, the stars, and divers other things are the causes of my silence and embarrassment." I am allowing Sganarelle<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Molière's celebrated comic character in *Le Malade Imaginaire*.

<sup>2</sup> Molière, *Le Festin de Pierre*, act i. scene 3.

to answer for me, my dear Guillaume. I went to see you on my return, to find an empty house and to hear that you were not expected back until November 1. I am at present living in a street out of the Rue du Four St. Germain, No. 5, Rue du Sabot, a melancholy name if ever there was one. M. Cousin is my third trouble ; I have been buried with him ever since the 1st of October, and I have written five immense articles about him, which will appear in the *Revue de l'Instruction*. I had been given an entirely free hand, and I have made use of it. The pupils I was going to have again this winter are in consumption, and M. Andral has sent them off to Pau. I have tried in vain to find others.

Quid non mortalia pectora cogit  
Auri sacra fames ?

M. Hachette has read my *Titus Livius* manuscript, and asks me to alter it in a way which puzzles me ; he would like it to be written in the same style as my *Voyage aux Pyrénées*; which is by no means an easy matter. And, M. Buloz<sup>1</sup> having asked me for a long article on Dickens, I am reading Dickens. You see that I have not lacked occupation here, whilst you, fortunate artist, happy man of letters, are enjoying the sight of Normandy cows and that lovely green grass which almost tempts one to eat it. I was devouring some, at least in imagination, at Fontainebleau, when I received your letter. It is ten years since I spent such a happy fortnight. I used to start every morning at eight o'clock with a bag of provisions, and to come home at seven in the evening, having walked six leagues (15 miles), and my eyes

<sup>1</sup> Of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.



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filled with landscape views.<sup>1</sup> I was quite alone, I knew nobody, and did not speak six words a day : you can imagine my happiness ! There are some grasses there, at least five feet high, growing in large clumps ; oaks with trunks fifteen feet round and about a hundred feet high (before spreading out into branches). It is the bed of a former sea, devastated by currents, with huge boulders lying here and there and a sandy ground grown all over with red or tawny heather which assumes glorious tints at sunset. And no one about—think of that ! absolutely no one. Symphonies sang in my brain, I heard Beethoven's Pastoral, and felt the Eternal Animal living in me ; I dreamt that my hydrogen, my carbon, and my oxygen would one day become grasses and heather and that I should be blissfully green, shining, splendid and calm, like those lovely plants on which I lay at full length. What a beautiful colour is red ! how delicious the sunshine ! how great a painter is Decamps ! how true it is that stones, trees, and animals are better than Man ! . . . I must stop ; if I continue, I shall have an inward vision of the sunlight streaming through the leaves, between the dark stems of the oaks, and I shall wander off into a dithyramb, forgetting that this was meant to be quite a matter-of-fact and utilitarian letter ; in fact, that I am writing to ask you to do me a service.

This is the service in question : do you happen to know whether a biography of Dickens or anything of the kind has been published in any English review ? Tell me of

<sup>1</sup> M. Taine always preserved a very strong partiality for the forest of Fontainebleau, and every year made a short stay at Marlotte or Barbizon.

it if you do, and do add a word on your own impression of Dickens:

I am preparing the article in question with a certain amount of pleasure. The man is a type, and teaches us much about English taste. Elegies or satires, a painfully acute sensitiveness, nothing is told simply and naturally. The characters are not liked for themselves, for the sake of logic, or for the pleasure of developing a force, as in Balzac. Dickens never forgets his moral for an instant; he praises, wounds, sneers, weeps or admires, but never paints. He has not that indifference of the artist who, like Nature, produces good and evil, and cares for nothing but to produce much, to produce great things. He does not love passions for themselves; he only tries to develop the emotions of the heart, and to make family life and sentiments attractive. His pictures are like those of the English School at the Exhibition, only better. Those people do not suspect that painting consists solely in the love for red and blue, straight and curved lines, in the joy of seeing life in great material things, and they produce ingenious little moral logographs like the *Wolf and the Lamb* or ornamental designs like *Oberon and Titania*. They hurt one's eyes with dreadful cruelty, and imagine that their cacophony of colours is pleasing. Such a style is less offensive in psychology and in literature than in painting; yet Dickens is trying to the nerves, and it is a rest to pass from him to Balzac or to George Sand, just as it is restful to look at Decamps' or Théodore Rousseau's work after Mulready's anæmic bathers or the cadaverous pictures of Millais.

Did Aix la Chapelle cure you? And was Charlemagne's

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Bath a sufficient compensation for the absurd figures of your dear friends, the Prussian shoemakers? It seems that they do not all look like shoemakers; some of them look like hairdressers, at least, Hegel did. You remember the story: A dandy stops him in the street, misled by his appearance. "Quick, come and cut my hair; I am going to a ball." "But I am not . . ." "Quick, quick, I tell you; come upstairs." "But I have not . . ." "Come along, I have all the implements upstairs." Hegel resigns himself, takes the scissors handed to him, and operates on the hair in philosophical fashion. The patient then looking at himself in the glass, discovers with horror that his head, with its ups and downs, hollows and protuberances, resembles a rough sea on a windy day. "I am Professor Hegel," says the hairdresser, "and never before to-day have I cut any one's hair!" I learnt German on purpose to read that hairdresser's writing, and I do not regret it.

The Eaux Bonnes have left me in *statu quo*. There, as elsewhere, I lacked faith, and I am punished. Good-bye, dear friend, give me your hand, since you do not refuse that of a sceptic; shake hands also for me with de Witt, who is as tolerant as you are. I did not leave my little book at your house, which will give you a reason or a pretext to come to my den and talk to me.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*October 22, 1855.*

DEAR FRIEND,—Forgive me, I have some very good excuses. First, I have been moving, and have hardly settled down in my new quarters yet. Secondly, fresh

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trouble has come upon me. The sister of my pupil in the Rue de . . . is in consumption. M. Andral has ordered her to Pau, and all her family are going with her. You see that every advantage has its drawbacks : the State keeps you furnished with pupils, whilst I have to go hunting for them. I have interviewed all my friends, and, like Sister Anne, I see nothing coming. And yet I must try to find something, for the money I earn at Hachette's is by no means proportionate to the work it represents. Writing is a mockery if one has ideas ; and, if one wants to express them in passable French, literature can only be a luxury, one must turn elsewhere to earn one's living.

I am reading your Dickens. Thank you, dear old fellow, for thinking of me at once. I only wish you had also sent me your ideas about him. He is so different from our French writers that it costs me a great effort to dissect him.

You are not honest with me ; you treat me like anybody. "Very pretty," "charming," etc., etc. Mere phrases, my dear Ed., such as I utter to indifferent acquaintances, and they to me. I appeal to your real opinion, which means that I demand a detailed criticism, with a mention of the best and worst pages, etc. ; in a word, something by which I may benefit.

I have read Prévost.<sup>1</sup> His three last chapters are excellent, with well chosen and very appropriate quotations—natural, interesting, and not too pompous. At the beginning of the chapter on the state of things in England, there are two pages, the solidity and breadth of which are admirable. I do not think the three chapters on England nearly new enough ; the impression they leave is neither

<sup>1</sup> Prévost Paradol's thesis : *Elizabeth and Henry IV.*

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strong nor original. The first chapter in the book is heavy, pompous, and obscured by oratorical monotony. The book seems to be that of a politician, a man quite capable of being a journalist or a member of Parliament, which explains the passionate opinions of the author about government.

There, my friend, here is an example of the sort of criticism which you owe me, and which I am awaiting. I beg that you will do the same for every writing of mine that you come across, even for short articles. Think of the ocean of lies I live in ! This is the reason why I hate Society so ; the flatness and monotony of the inevitable comedy that I have to hear perforce bore me to death. Only my real friends can tell me the truth in detail. I went to a party yesterday, and was so bored that I ended by sitting near the piano and forgetting to do anything but listen. I was constantly feeling tempted to say, " Yes, I know all that, and you know it, too ; let us talk of something else."

*Titus Livius* will go to press in January ; at present Hachette is rather overstocked. Besides, it is not all settled ; he read my manuscript during the holidays, and thinks it too scholastic. He tells me that those precise divisions, that methodical concatenation which seizes the reader by one foot and immerses him up to his neck in a sea of syllogisms, will put off the public. He thinks I should have written lightly and easily, in the style of my *Pyrénées* ; he is shocked that I should attempt to point out an ideal to History, and that I should suppose that there is such a thing as universal history, progress, etc. I do not yet know what I shall do.

As to my English literature, I feel inclined to kick you ; it is the third compliment in your letter. The deuce take you. Do you think you are paying a duty call ? : : : Besides, remember the enormous amount of reading I still have to get through !

I can well believe that Law bores you ; Philosophy would amuse you. I dare not wish you to take it up. I have two or three times been on the verge of offering you my Hegel, which I believe you have not read, at least the *Encyclopædia* ; I feel perfectly certain that in a few months you would sink into the depths of heresy and that the extraordinary attractiveness of the subject would make you let slip some imprudent words in your classes. I dare not even urge you to take up Psychology again ; I know it would prevent me from teaching ; I should have to keep an official form of it, an innocent form, with inflexible formulæ, separated by a wide gulf from my real thoughts. And that is almost impossible, for the ideas that come to one are such a pleasure that one cannot refrain from thinking aloud.

I have given Hachette eight pages of manuscript on the excellent M. Cousin, in which I have inserted a refutation of his theory of Reason. Tell me whether it is clear and likely to seem conclusive to the public. Mockery rose to my lips at every line. I ended by relating his life as it ought to have been, making him a product of the seventeenth century, a preacher and a theologian. Will it go down ? Hachette asked for it ; but perhaps he may lose those of his subscribers who are Professors of Philosophy.

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*To Guillaume Guizot.*

*Paris, October 25, 1855.*

You are laughing at me, dear Guillaume, and you are right ; I expected it and that was why I clipped the wings of my dithyramb. Besides, a dithyramb is not a confession of faith ! Let us, if you please, distinguish the scientific, analytical and reasoning *ego* of school hours from the feeling *ego* of the holidays. Take my nonsense for what it is worth ; I felt aloud for one moment and told you the more or less empty dreams suggested to me by the trees. I do not impose those dreams on any one, nor do I commend them. On thinking them over, I find that, though I enjoy them, others would probably dislike them ; the source of them is a sad one, and I had forgotten it whilst writing to you. Between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, a string broke in my machinery ; I have tried in vain to mend it ; it remained hanging, entangled with the others, and, when I try to play on my instrument it makes it sound out of tune. Forgive those disagreeable sounds, they are so natural to me that they are quite involuntary, and, when you hear them, think of the accursed string which I am powerless to tie up again. My scientific *ego* heartily agrees that man is worth more than a tree, and it explains to my thinking *ego* why the hollow dreams I told you about give it pleasure. When one can thus become transplanted and incarnate in a stone or in a sprig of heather, a feeling and thinking animal becomes incarnate therein, enjoying the tranquillity of its new dwelling, as contrasted with its former habitation and the serenity of Nature pacifies its ideas and passions. I own that it is a delusion, but why destroy it ? I have not the courage

to quarrel with my pleasure, and I experience an extreme delight in feeling the logician, whom I nursed in my own bosom, go away to make room for the child.

Do not believe that I am as inconsistent as you say ! Why conclude that because I love plants and great horizons I must also love champagne ? The sensations they give me have nothing in common with the intoxication caused by wine. I love Philosophy, Music and Painting in the same way and for the same reason as I love the rosy tints of heather on the distant hills. Hegel, Decamps, Beethoven, and the Pyrenees are to me but different means of producing the same effect, which I call a sensation for want of a better word, but which I will call excitement or emotion if you like ; it means a state of mind which prevents one, when walking in the streets, from noticing houses or carriages, and in which I should be capable of walking six leagues (fifteen miles) in three hours without feeling any fatigue. You can see at once why I remain in my room and why I do not drink much champagne. I have a piano and some pictures ; the warder of the Louvre lets me walk in whenever I like ; I have my books, I attend some dissection classes at the School of Medicine and some lectures on chemistry at the Sorbonne. It is all this which puts me in the above state, not wine ; and that is why I think of other things when I do drink a little wine. I conclude that you are wrong and that I can conciliate a great love for stones with a certain distaste for champagne, and that therefore you must concede to me the right of staying at home.

I have been examining my conscience and wondering whether I am as immoral as you believe ; not quite,



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I think ; here again we must distinguish : my great thesis is that everything should have its place. In practical life Morality should be sovereign : I agree with you that nothing is more beautiful than Justice ; I love History because it shows me the birth and progress of Justice, and I find it all the more beautiful in that I see in it the ultimate developement of Nature. Everywhere above and below us is Force ; blind laws accomplish themselves in a fixed order and their inflexible system builds up the world with the sorrow and death of individuals. We ourselves light the torch of Right and Justice and carry it above the immorality of Nature and the violence of History ; and being a man would be worth nothing if we could neither see this light nor love it. But, if I see it and love it in its own domain, I exclude it from the domain of others. Art and Science are independent of it, it should have no domination over them ; the artist who is about to produce a statue or the philosopher who is formulating a law, should not ask themselves whether this statue will be useful to morals or whether the law will incline men towards virtue. The artist has no object but to produce that which is beautiful, the scientist that which is true. To change them into preachers is to destroy them ; Art and Science disappear as soon as they are turned into instruments of education and government. That is why you find me so badly disposed towards Literature when it calls itself a teacher, and against Philosophy, when it assumes the part of a guardian of public order. I am shocked when I read novels akin to Miss Edgeworth's *Tales*, the *Edifying Letters*, the *Morale en Action*, and stories about celebrated faithful dogs ; and it seems to me that M. Cousin would do better

not to pose as an intellectual policeman. When I read him I feel as if I were listening to the following speech from a *procureur général* :<sup>1</sup>

"Gentlemen of the Jury,—The accused, who is now before you, is convicted by irrefragable proofs, and by his own confession, of having murdered and robbed his best friend. It seems, therefore, that I should here end my speech, and allow you to pronounce the verdict imposed on you by the evidence, leaving him to the punishment reserved for him by the law. But it will not be so. It is my duty to attract your attention to the scientific character of the murder which I denounce, and to the artistic qualities of the murderer whom I accuse. That murder, gentlemen, was committed by means of a triangular dagger, sharpened on that very morning, in a most scientific manner, with a care of which a surgeon might be proud. It was pushed into the left ventricle of the heart, in a position which is well known to be of all positions the most effectual. The ventricle was traversed through and through, thus offering a double outlet to the blood and a double path to death. The dagger was so sharp and the blow so sure that hæmorrhage took place internally, and the victim did not utter a single cry. You will see, gentlemen, that the whole Society of Chirurgy would protest if you were to condemn the author of so perfect an operation. Then, look at the accused ; his noble head, his proud demeanour and lithe form would afford our sculptors a worthy model. He has not evidenced the slightest remorse ; he never felt a minute's hesitation before the deed. The victim having been his friend for ten years, he concluded

<sup>1</sup> Government Prosecutor.

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with perfect logic (unfortunately belied by the event) that he would not be charged with his death: The testimony of the witnesses has proved that he led an adventurous life, that his needs were great, his passions excessive, and his greed and hatred boundless. You must now be convinced that never was a finer type offered to a novelist. In the name of Science and of Art, for the sake of surgeons, novelists, and sculptors, I abandon the prosecution, and entreat the Court to give back to society a man who is calculated to become its greatest ornament."

You see, my dear fellow, that I am sending you an Apology according to all the rules. When you come here I will give you an apology for my opinions about painting, and we will disagree ; nothing is more enjoyable.

Thank you for your most kind offer about the *Débats*. They will only begin printing my book in January ; you may be sure that I shall not listen to Hachette. At the most I may alter the table of contents and the first chapter about the Ideal Critic. . . .

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, November 23, 1855.*

I am probably doing a stupid thing in writing to you, dear Édouard. My ideas are of a dull, dark colour, and even the thought of your dear good face does not cheer me up ! It is partly from small worries : my articles on Cousin have been stopped (they thought I was attacking Morality, and wanted to cut off three columns). I am awaiting the return of M. Hachette, who is away. Then a postponement—which may be indefinite—at the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. They do not admit quotations from Dickens

as samples of his style. The more I study the style of writing of M. de Mars, my reader, the less I hope to make him accept my own.

I am still frequently feverish ; I cannot find any pupils, etc., etc. All this is very small in itself, but the worst of it is that each little trouble, like a small pebble, stirs up the bed of black philosophical mud in which we used to paddle together at the École ; the water remains thick, and I dream of that blessed Red Sea which you remember.

I tried to attend a course on Physics (M. Despretz'). The first lesson was a detailed description of the way to construct a thermometer!!! Drion tells me that, to his knowledge, there is not a single book on philosophical Physics written in French, English, or German. Our scientists are mere workshop foremen. There remains Hegel, with his deplorable abstractions and his habit of soaring three hundred feet above the facts. As a consolation I plunge into History and hard work ; I have within the last month engulfed a whole cargo of books, English works, chronicles, writers, etc., etc. But what a lot one must wade through before coming across an idea!! how few are the moments of pleasure and how many those of fatigue both of brain and eyes ! What hours of mechanical reading ! I am indeed a mere machine, a machine disgusted with itself. My mainspring is an old habit of working, here and there a breath of imagination and some whiffs of pride and vanity. Nothing for reason's sake, but a careful calculation of pleasure and pain, the result of the sum being that the proportion of pain is about a hundred to one. I have long ago given up Reason and resigned

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myself to Stupidity. I am afraid we are all in the same case, more or less. We have two selves within us, one of them a sceptical and ironical consciousness which amuses itself by mocking the primitive habits and inclinations of the other. Those habits and inclinations follow their course in spite of the sneers. And so we act seriously, though not taking ourselves seriously.

After reading from ten to two o'clock in the Library, I go to the *Estampes* to study the masters of the sixteenth century, Jules Romain, Raphael, Sebastian del Piombo. It is like learning a language. I am beginning to read it fluently ; a fold in a drapery is a trace of passion like an epithet. I am trying to rediscover and to feel the passions of the sixteenth century ; their manners were those of cattle-drovers, with poets' imaginations and the morality of thieves. I had no idea of the sensuality of those times, and in particular of that of Raphael. The divine Sanzio was a vigorous and magnificent Sultan. If he ever loved, he can only have loved contours and beautiful bare flesh ; his immense nude female figures are like untamed mares in their calm indecency ; they have the freedom, innocence, and petulance of wild beasts. Think of the courtesan Imperia, who died at twenty-four and was buried in a church at Rome, with a mention of her profession and an eulogy of her beauty !! It is Debauch in its flower, pure and naïve Sensuousness.

I believe Prévost told me that you were translating a German novel for M. Simon. Is it worth *Jonathan Frock* ? Is there in Germany any fiction worth reading ? If so, what style is it in ? Write to me, talk to me of something ! I never see anybody, I talk of nothing but the weather, my

horror of ordinary conversation is deepening every day ; when I want to open my mouth, I find that the ideas which come to my mind would shock my interlocutors, and therefore have to keep it closed. Do let us speak to each other ! talk to me ! let us choose a subject if necessary. We could reopen our metaphysical discussions. Tell me the scientific news that you hear, or the ideas that grow in your brain.

M. Puel had the prize (he shared it with another man). I tried to obtain Lemoine's *Sleep*, but could not ; then X.'s account of it dissuaded me from it ; his " independence of the soul " is so ridiculous that it is no use troubling about such blind fools. I read Lyell's *Geology* (Meulen's translation), and find it hard to believe that a mountain range like the Pyrenees or the Apennines can have been gradually upheaved by two or three feet every century, like the Norwegian coast. But his refutation of those writers who suppose a central fire is very noticeable. He proves very clearly that, if the interior mass were in a state of fusion, the waves of boiling granite would melt the outer crust ; according to the laws of dilatation and of the equilibrium of liquids, the hottest liquid part would rise to the surface from the very centre, and nothing solid would remain.

The *Revue des Deux Mondes* has some interesting pages by Renan on Jewish History. It is a good thing to show to our Catholics how criticism deals with Moses and the authenticity of the Scriptures. For instance, he explains that the last compilation of the Pentateuch dates from the eighth century. What a pity it is that one must spend one's time in earning one's living ! If About would

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do it, he would find in this the substance of a delightful and useful book ; he would only have to put into good French the researches of German *savants*. He had thought of doing so *à propos* of Strauss when he was in Greece.

Let us wish success to each other, dear Ed., it will make us believe that success is worth wishing for, and that very supposition is a blessing and a strength !! We want it badly.

I have not seen Prévost for a fortnight.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, January 22, 1856.*

You are not very true to your word, my dear Édouard. You were to have written to me first, and I am still waiting for your letter. What news have you ? I have heard nothing from Prévost, but I am told that he is writing a discourse on Vauvenargues for the Academy competition—sixty pages for two thousand francs (£80). He has the old traditions of eloquence, and it will be as successful as his *Bernardin de St. Pierre*.<sup>1</sup>

I give my lessons mechanically, and have done so for some days, having suddenly become incapable of working. My head feels heavy ; I am occasionally feverish, and I cannot compel my mind to concentration. I am not progressing with my work, and shall deem myself happy if I can finish in three months what I intended to do in one. I think I made a mistake in undertaking that *History of English Literature* ; it is too roundabout a road to philosophy—something like going to Versailles by way of Strasburg. I cannot come to terms with the *Revue des Deux Mondes* ;

<sup>1</sup> Academy prize essay for 1851.

I do not know yet whether they will take *Dickens* or not. I have made so many alterations in it that I am perfectly sick of it, and there are times when I should like to send them flying. Yet they have accepted a paper on Spenser, so I am kept hanging on, but with a strong inclination to let go, even at the risk of dropping to the ground.

About's play is being rehearsed, and he now has but the Censor to fear ; it will probably be put on at Mid-Lent.

I am absolutely void of any idea worth writing ; or rather, if I have any ideas, I lack the courage to write them down. My brain works when I am in the omnibus on my way to the Boulevard de Strasbourg, but it all goes into smoke, leaving nothing behind but fever. Forgive these very blue thoughts.

I wonder whether anything is of any use or worth any real effort ? I do see that, if every one of us pushes at the wheel, our thirty-six million hands will make the machine advance ; but each effort and each worker is so imperceptible that it is all one can do to push for conscience sake. It is absurd to push from mere enthusiasm and in the hope of seeing much progress.

See in your library whether you have Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. No English is easier to understand, richer or more flowing ; nowhere is there such an assemblage of abundant fiction, blissful imaginations, and marvellous adventures. It is like soaring on the wings of a beautiful swan ; this aerial and fantastic world seems Man's natural home. It is like Ariosto, but serious, tender, touching, exalted, Platonician. It resembles in nowise Shakespeare's rapid, tormented, and dazzling Fairyland ; it is perfectly calm, bright, and sweet. I shall endeavour to



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show this delight of Imagination, this beautiful madness of sixteenth-century poetry, to our modern public fed on physiological novels. But my poor head cannot think ; I would much prefer to talk to you. When will you be a Professor at St. Louis, living in a room over the Luxembourg near your old comrade ?

*To Prévost-Paradol.*

*Paris, April 20, 1856.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I can tell you nothing worth saying or likely to interest you. My head aches. I am having some shower-baths,<sup>1</sup> working a little, and touting for pupils. I have just finished my *Montalembert*, of which you will disapprove. You see, there is nothing to amuse you in all this. M. Gérusez, at whose house I was the other day, read me your letter : you are a politician and I am not. That settles it. I have nothing to say to you about politics, therefore nothing interesting. Yes, I have, though. M. Simon called me an ignorant man when I said that M. de Falloux' election seemed a pretext in favour of Fusion against the Emperor. According to him, the Emperor is highly pleased, and the election is a slap in the face of the Republicans. What do you make of this ?

My volume is about to appear. As M. Gérusez introduced you and About to the readers of the *Revue*, I asked him whether he would do the same for me. He said he would, but with some reservations, fearing lest the subject might be too historical or too philosophical, and probably anxious to go on with his *History of Literature in the Nine-*

<sup>1</sup> M. Taine was at that time undergoing hydropathic treatment at Bellevue.

*teenth Century*. If he will not, would you undertake it? <sup>1</sup>

I am going to write an article on M. Guizot's two new volumes.<sup>2</sup> You do not like him; yet he is a fine animal to dissect. There are some superb sentences, of a wonderful solidity and majesty; he is a metaphysical orator. Unfortunately, he lays down too many moral axioms.

Have you seen the disgusting stuff to which the Véron prize has been awarded? Lyrical purrings, cold-blooded enthusiasm, jerky verses, platitudes, and canary-bird tunes at 2,000 francs each!!

Three days ago, thirty-one *Vauvenargues* had been read through, and twenty-eight of them eliminated; the three remaining ones comprising yours and M. Poitou's. The *Education* manuscripts have not yet been examined.

I had the great honour of a visit from M. Michelet, à propos of my article on his *Oiseau*. He is as young as possible, showing marvellous vitality, and very nicely dressed, very neat, with a fine smile. I had pleased him chiefly by pointing out his special manner of writing and the harmony of his style, and by leaving his collaborator (Mme. Michelet) in a discreet shadow. His conversation is like a revised edition of his books; he has retained from his Professor's chair the habit of raising his voice at the end of his sentences, which gives an appearance of false emphasis to his ideas. He is very bitter against the mechanical means by which faith was settled at the Council of Trent, and against the League. According to him, the people were neither ferocious nor fanatical, but were

<sup>1</sup> Prévost-Paradol did in fact write the article on Taine's *Titus Livius* for the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*, June 1856.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de la Révolution d'Angleterre*, see p. 47.

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worked into a frenzy by the incessant and furious sermons of the priests. At Trent, Cardinal Contarini, the greatest *savant* and the most honest man in the Council, propounded doctrines on Grace which were very near to those held by the Protestants. It was the Jesuit Lainez who drew the Fathers in the other direction, objecting that it was necessary to have an abyss, an impassable line, between the dogmas.

I am reading the Protestant writers of the English Reformation. Jeremy Taylor, the so-called English Bosuet, is a thousand feet below ours. He is neither a logician nor an analyst, but a pedant, surcharged with Greek and Latin quotations, divisions, etc., half sunk in mediæval mud; he is also very Christian and intolerant. But there are fifty pages at the beginning of his *Holy Dying* which are sublime in their deep and bitter sentiment rendered in true and masterly style—full of the feeling of Death. The English colouring of Milton and Co. and their successors is of a dark blood-red, framed in black, with a Rembrandt-*esque* streak of lurid light. A curious writer is Bunyan (*Pilgrim's Progress*); it is a nursery tale, a blood-curdling allegory, showing the terrible inner mind of one of those fanatics: groans, invasions of the Spirit, the belief in Damnation, visions of the Devil, scruples, etc. ! Oh ! do not turn us into Protestants; let us remain Voltaireans and Spinozists ! After the hallucination is calmed down, a sort of rigidity remains, moral spikes with which to wound oneself continually and to stab others. Now that you are half an Italian, walking in orange-groves, confess that the blue sky is beautiful, that art and enjoyment are good things, that painted nudity need not be veiled, that

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it is better to look at a fine cloud or at a Titian than to read the Bible and learn that the Lord is a roaring lion, and that Ehu or some other person opened the king's entrails with a large knife so that his bowels fell to the ground. Away with butchers, fanatics, Shakers, Puritans, and inventors of *cant*!! Let us preserve mockery, audacity of mind, even the licentiousness of our schools. You, especially, a Platonician, a friend of Charmides, dear Greek Professor of Ethics, remain what you are. I would rather be condemned to an eternity of Bonapartes than lose the right of talking as we used to do. Liberty of thought is well worth political liberty. Besides, you will alter nothing, and we shall not become converted.

*To Guillaume Guizot.*

*Paris, June 3, 1856.*

MY DEAR GUILLAUME,—The article on “Richard Cromwell and the English Revolution” has been delayed for typographical reasons; you will see it on Thursday. I applied my method, whether true or false: I had to do with a monument, and, finding it too vast to be merely praised, I attempted to define it. You remember our compact? Please act upon it frankly and directly, without putting on the gloves. I shall do the same for you when the opportunity arises.

I may become your collaborator on the *Débats*. A third person offered to introduce me to M. de Sacy, who asked me for three articles on Saint Simon. I have sent them in but do not know whether they will be accepted. I shall be delighted if they are—it will be one more bond between us.

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*À propos* of this, M. de Buloz accuses me of unfaithfulness. My article on Shakespeare had already been postponed, though the proofs of it were printed and corrected. I do not know whether the postponement is indefinite.

I am ill, and can only say good-bye to you ; terrible headaches prevent me from doing any more work ; I am going to some village near Fontainebleau, where I shall spend a month, walking about and doing nothing. Will you come too ?

Take better care of your health than I have done of mine, and write to me if you can ; your letters will be forwarded to me from here.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, July 8, 1856.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—I was just going to write you a love letter or a letter of vituperation, one or the other.

Why do you tell me nothing about yourself, the way you spend your time, your readings, etc. ? If you do not go to Athens, will you remain at Rouen ? Every one preaches to the advantage of his own patron saint. You see nothing but the roses of my profession, but each rose is in the middle of a regular bundle of thorns. Buloz has stopped my *Montalembert*, for fear of the Government, though it was a most innocent article ; moreover, on account of a lawsuit, he was afraid of displeasing the judges. He also had from me a big article on Shakespeare : it was in print two months ago, and now he has suspended that also, with the excuse that other papers were more pressing, but really because he is vexed that I contribute to the *Débats*. He has just read it, and says it is too full of

particular facts and devoid of general interest. I do not know what will be the outcome of it all.

For the *Débats* I have written three articles on Hachette's *Saint Simon*. I have been waiting and hanging round their offices for five weeks. They keep on promising proofs which do not come. And when they do come, I shall still have to conciliate M. de Sacy, who is confoundedly partial to the seventeenth century.

If I were to tell you the terrible efforts that it cost me to get *Titus Livius* printed, to say nothing of obtaining the prize, you would laugh or get angry. The *Xenophon* you are reading was refused by Hachette a year ago. I re-wrote the Introduction, and took advantage of an opportunity.

I have finished with *Maine de Biran*, and am writing the second paper on *Jouffroy* (there will be three of them, plus three more, of conclusions). I shall give up August to my English writers and am reading Milton's prose works.

I spent three weeks at Fontainebleau to cure my head, but it is only partly cured. For the last eight months I have spent half of every day in having *migraine*, and in gnawing at my heart like Bellerophon.

I thanked Prévost for his kind article.<sup>1</sup> Criticism or praise is all one to me; the essential thing is a little trum-peting. When one knows how newspaper articles are obtained, one becomes absolutely callous, there is no room left for vanity. My only object is to attain to notoriety so that, when my work on Psychology comes out, a portion of the public should say to itself, "There is a two-footed

<sup>1</sup> See page 111, note 1.

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animal with a pen whose ideas are of such and such a colour and whose style is of such and such a fashion. That biped may have something new and clear to say on this subject ; we will read what he says."

About's latest novel (*Le Roi des Montagnes*) is charming ; he is more of a novelist than I should have thought. I will write a review of it for the *Débats* if they will let me.

As to my imprudence *re* Guizot, it was voluntary and premeditated. I had praised the young man, as is due to novices ; besides, the public knew that my articles were biased by friendship. But, as to the father, it would have been cringing and hardly honourable ; besides, I had been told that he was very tolerant. I had told Guillaume about it before his departure, but he was gone, and I could not show him my paper. I do not know what they feel about it ; they are away ; and then M. Guizot does not pretend to be a novelist or to inspire sympathy ; he remains quite cold-blooded and gives demonstrations: Look at the second part of his book ; it contradicts the first part, and declares that, History being philosophical and political, one should be a politician and a philosopher. Anyhow, I took the risk ; I have a horror and am indeed incapable of wrapping up my thoughts and of stating a clear idea in an obscure manner.

So you are going to Italy ? we shall never spend our holidays together. Do try to give me two or three days in August !

You will find me on your return, in October, in the Ile St. Louis, Rue St. Louis, opposite the cathedral, and you can come and look at the Seine from my windows. . . . You should write a thesis ; everybody is working away

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at theses, articles, books, etc. Monin, Villetard, and Dupré are writing novels.

*To Guillaume Guizot.*

*Paris, July 25, 1856.*

Thank you for your *Alfred*, my dear Guillaume. I have read it carefully through, and will now tell you what I think of it, according to our compact. It is serious, solid, scientific, well thought out, and well composed; it has what *Menander* lacked—order, regular division, continuous movement, logical concatenation, greater precision and vigour. You were saying that you opposed my opinions from one end of the book to the other. I do not think our opinions are so contrary as all that; our points of view differ, that is all. You say: Considering the barbarians amongst whom Alfred had been brought up, he must be looked upon as a very reflective and sensible man, a man of culture and imagination. I tried to say: Though he was the Charlemagne of his century, traces of his barbaric surroundings are to be found in his writings and in his life. According to you, he is civilized compared with barbarians; and according to me, he is a barbarian compared with civilized men. These two judgments by no means preclude one another, and, for my part, I accept yours most heartily.

Now for reproaches. I must own that the book seems to me inferior to *Menander*. You have cut away from it the youthfulness which was apparent in your first work, the abundance and luxury of erudition and of ideas, the delight of learning, of finding out, of thinking, the thousand delicate traits which covered each page with their fine net-



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work ; in a word, the force and richness which placed the book above the ordinary level. The sound reasoning and exact plan of *Alfred* do not make up for all that ; they are not carried far enough to constitute an originality, a personal and striking character. I think you must have reined yourself in during 250 pages ; you seem to have been afraid to follow your inclination and to let yourself go.

I believe that Talent consists in an assemblage of ordinary qualities, plus one or two particularly developed faculties. You have two : one, very apparent in your *Menander*, which is grace, smiling refinement, the variety of ideas. . . : Your letters bear witness to the other, which seems to me the more powerful of the two, and which you have not yet made use of ; namely, the pleasure and capability of forcibly developing an argument, of demonstrating it with excess, of entering willy-nilly into the intelligence and conviction which you attack, the multitude of forms of expression for the same idea, the art of showing every aspect of an idea ; more, the talent of presenting it finally under a paradoxical and piquant form. You will produce something great when you learn to make use of that gift. I can foresee the formula that I shall then have to find for my Guillaume—oratorical art in the service of grace and refinement. Then, again, a few phrases seem to me to lack clearness, probably on account of their extreme solemnity ; for instance, see page 84. . . .

There ! I hope I stick to the letter of our treaty ! You must now pay me back, and I wish you would do so *à propos* of my article on Richard Cromwell ; I have been counting on it.

If you shou'd look at my *Shakespeare* in the *Revue des*

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*Deux Mondes*, you can skip the exordium, which they have corrected and transformed three or four times ; read, at the top of the second page, *Je vais décrire* instead of *c'était*. They make alterations on their own private account, and add their mistakes to those already made.

I heard at Hachette's that About was writing a review of your book. I would have offered to do so, but as I introduced *Menander*, it is better that he should do *Alfred*.

What are you doing ? You no doubt came to Paris, but I never saw you. I spent June in the forest of Fontainebleau. I have been working hard since July 1, and I am finishing my *Philosophes Classiques Contemporains*, Maine de Biran, M. Jouffroy, an article on the causes of Spiritualism, plus two concluding articles on Method.

*To his Mother.*

*Biarritz, September 27, 1856.*

. . . As you see, H.M. the Emperor has the honour of inhabiting the same town as I.

I left the Eaux-Bonnes the day before yesterday at five o'clock in the morning, and for fifteen hours, perched on the front seat, I had a view of the most beautiful parts of Béarn : blue sky at first, then pearly clouds, a soft wind, not too much heat, a good novel in my pocket in case of dull moments—altogether one of the pleasantest days of my tour. We went along the rich valley of the Gave, a sort of overflowing cup, full of maize harvests, edged on the right hand with low hills, and the long cloudy range of the Pyrenees on the left. Certainly there is nothing like a beautiful landscape. I am a countryman at

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heart, and when I see woodlands, meadows, streams, and pastures I am content, and ask for nothing more.

Bayonne is a neat little town, partly Spanish ; everywhere one meets Spaniards in short jackets and velvet breeches ; almost all the shop-signs are both in French and in Spanish. A hideous cathedral is the only monument ; it is unfinished, with a stumpy tower arrested halfway up three centuries ago, heavy masses of stones unskilfully joined together, little shops filling the corners like parasitic fungi, and, close by, as a contrast, a pretty modern episcopal palace. The big streets have arcades like those of the Rue de Rivoli, but low and ungraceful. The quays are charming ; the river is very broad and full of craft floating about like birds. The tall slender masts and spars stand out with infinite grace against the white dazzling sky, full of smiling morning freshness. The sun rises on the silvery river ; there are little groups of clouds, smooth and shining like pearl-shells set in the distant, luminous blue, which seems transparent and as beautiful as a precious lapis lazuli. The quay is edged with a triple row of old trees. It is absolutely deserted in the morning, and nothing is more charming than that long solitary walk, with the leaves trembling in the faint sea-breeze by the shining water flowing calmly and without effort between two ranges of hills, whilst long pine forests of a tender green spread over the horizon, and the curves of the river disappear in an indistinct perspective. Why do not people live on the Bayonne quay ? I answer to myself that in a week's time the charm of it would be lost to me, and I should think of my own affairs and worries instead of looking at the view. There are a hundred and

one amusing thing to see : sailors climbing into the rigging and arranging their sails—boats full of timber unloaded by oxen—others in the course of construction, standing up against the sky like half-dissected carcasses,—open-air rope-walks along which men walk backwards, their waists swathed in tow, drawing out the rope as they twist it ; above all, infinite novelty and attraction.

I spent two hours in the Library ; the librarian was most obliging. He provided me with a pile of books and documents concerning a pretty little massacre in the fourteenth century, <sup>1</sup> which might furnish an episode for the second edition of the *Voyage aux Pyrénées*. Unfortunately, in order to give a good description, one would have to see five or six men killed, so I do not know whether I shall write it or not. . . .

About half a league farther on the sea is seen for the first time, looking like a blue cloud. The coast is barren, and presents no vegetation but some ragged turf and a few stunted tamarinds. The port consists of two or three creeks, one of them very broad ; I have discovered no ships, as yet, in the harbour or in the open sea. Fifty feet from the beach there are enormous blocks of earth and stones loosened by the sea, gnawed, worn and hollowed out into caverns into which the howling waves are engulfed, only to splash out again in foaming spray. Some of these arcades are very high, and seem to have been made by the great winter tides ; people go and sit there at low tide. The roar of the rushing water, broken by other waves, never ceases ; at a distance it sounds like the trumpeting of a herd of elephants. There is

<sup>1</sup> The episode of the Pé de Puyane, added to the first chapter.

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nothing here to please modern taste. The village is scattered high and low, right and left, like routed soldiers; hotels and white walls pierced in irregular order by rectangular windows. Only a painter of the seventeenth century could find any pleasure in it. Look at Sébastien Leclerc's pictures: two or three long dry hills, a few monumental buildings, an endless vista of sea-coast, a lighthouse, and the boundless ocean—that is enough for him. We want more; it is certainly only because His Majesty has made this place fashionable that the public come here at all.

But, towards evening, the southern aspect becomes magnificent. The coast of Spain appears, a white, sinuous, almost indistinct band, the contours of the mountains rising in irregular peaks, softened by the distance. Nothing could be more ethereal or of a more tender beauty. The sandy downs of the French coast incline in mellow curves towards the sea and become merged into it. The radiant blue sea, striped along its edge by lines of foam, spreads its innumerable wavelets under the powerful sunlight and white swan-like clouds hang in downy flakes in the transparent air. The clearness of the air and the glamour of the sky surround them with a sort of angelic glory. With a little imagination, they might be taken for celestial beings floating in an ecstasy of bliss; that sublime and motionless flight in this flood of light must have given the notion of Paradise to the Southern population.

I went up at night to a green platform where there is a cross; no moon, but stars everywhere, vaguely illuminating the immensity of the sea. The dark coast, dotted with lights, is a great indistinct mass; the lantern of the

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lighthouse glows and disappears in measured intervals. Nothing is to be seen around but grand and hazy forms, and the dull roar of the retreating tide is like the bass part of the Nocturne. This morning the sky is cloudy, the wind boisterous, and the waves break heavily; the sea, of a dull grey-green colour, whitens on the horizon where it meets the leaden sky.

Such are my sensations. : : . If I were About, I would write amusing things, but you cannot draw blood from a stone!! . . .

I bathe in the sea and shall avail myself of these few days by taking long walks.

*To Ernest Renan.*<sup>1</sup>

*Paris, January 3, 1857;*

One of your collaborators, sir, who frequently has the pleasure of reading your work and always the honour of admiring it, begs your kind acceptance of the accompanying book. He will not say what he thinks of your writings, preferring as he does to speak of you when your back is turned. But you will infer it from his readings. He passionately loves History, History treated in a general way; he has lived half his life steeped in Psychology and has attempted Physiology in order to understand craniums, heredity, and races; he has read German philosophers—in fact, nearly all philosophers. This will tell you what he thinks of *Averroes*, of the *History of Semitic Languages*, of the articles on *Language*, and of many other things. He now

<sup>1</sup> This letter was sent to M. Renan with the first volume of the *Philosophes Français*, and marks the opening of his acquaintance with Taine; they both were contributors to the *Journal des Débats*.

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offers a little book on Criticism to a critic, a little book on Philosophy to a philosopher, who, under the pretext of avoiding philosophy, brings it into everything, even into the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*; a little book on History to him who has imported Psychology into History; and he begs you to accept this homage, not from your devoted servant (he detests phrases), but from the earliest and most attentive of your readers.

*To Sainte Beuve.*<sup>1</sup>

*Paris, January, 1857.*

SIR,—When a beginner, armed with his book, presents himself before a master, he turns his hat between his fingers, does not know where to sit, uncovers his poor volume only to hide it again, begins sentences which he cannot end and feels absolutely foolish. A moment ago, on the stairs, he was thinking aloud, and with no difficulty, “Inventor of a new method of criticism, most delicate of Psychologists, most finished and tender painter of Life.” His mind was suggesting all this and many other things, only to become dumb when introduced into the drawing-room. He now hands the book, bows hastily, and departs. I also bow, and would like to depart. I have, alas! twenty reasons for wishing to do so. I have spoken here of Philosophy, and the very word hurries me away. But I would gladly listen at the keyhole if I could then hear your opinion, whatever it may be.

<sup>1</sup> Taine's first letter to Ste. Beuve, enclosed with the first volume of the *Philosophes Français*. It was only after the celebrated critic had written two great articles in the *Moniteur* about Taine that the young writer was personally introduced to him.

## CHAPTER III

1857-1859

First Symptoms of Collapse—H. Taine is forced to Interrupt his Work—Articles Published during this Period—Publication of *Essais de Critique d'Histoire* — Travels in Belgium, Holland, and Germany—Correspondence and Travelling Notes

WE have now come to a time when it seems that Hippolyte Taine should have reached a haven ; he was hardly twenty-nine years old, and his literary fame was almost undisputed. Every door was open to him, save that of Official Education, which he no longer desired to enter, and he had two great works in preparation, either of which would have sufficed to make his name famous.

But if the Eaux-Bonnes had cured his laryngitis, he was soon to pay a heavier price for his excessive labour : on the morrow of his first success, he was arrested by an attack of cerebral fatigue and nervous depression, which lasted over two years and compelled him to completely suspend his philosophical researches, only to resume them ten years



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later. He also had to give up a great portion of his literary studies, only writing from time to time, finishing articles already sketched out, touching up his early works for fresh editions, and condemned to long months of complete inaction, during which he was not even capable of reading seriously. In summer he took refuge in the country, in the hills at Orsay or in the forest of Fontainebleau, botanizing with the help of Mérat's little book, or talking of medicine with his brother-in-law, Dr. Letorsay, accompanying him on his rounds, questioning the peasants and artisans in the small villages which he visited, and finding some consolation for his present troubles in the beauty of the fields and the deep harmonies of the trees which he loved. But, during the hard winter days, idleness became a veritable torture to his thirsty mind. He tried to charm his enforced leisure by visiting a few friends, playing the piano, and walking to the Jardin des Plantes or along the quays of the Ile Saint Louis, where he had rooms at the time. He would stand by the Seine, watching the unloading of heavy boats, full of apples from Normandy orchards: years later the odour of apples would evoke within him the vision of his lonely walks and of his time of trial. Sometimes he would spend long hours in his study, his eyes closed to keep the light from his throbbing brain, listening to the monotonous voice of a secretary reading heavy historical compilations; amongst others Dangeau's *Journal*, the *Moniteur Universel*, and the forty volumes of Buchez and Roux' *Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française*, from which he formed his first opinions on the principal actors of the great revolutionary drama. At other times, in order to woo an elusive sleep, he would

force himself to fatiguing exertions, going down the cellar and splitting wood like a common labourer; later in life he used to declare laughingly that those hours of work in the darkness had taught him to discern the infinite shadings of light and had revealed to him the masterly beauties of Rembrandt's art.

A few works prepared in the previous year appeared during the first months of 1857; first of all, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, an article on Thackeray, which was reproduced in the first edition of the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, and finally formed the second chapter of the fifth volume of the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. Then, in the same review, an article on Milton, which was also reproduced, with alterations, in the work on English Literature. The *Journal des Débats* published in succession a paper on the *Princesse de Clèves*, and three others on M. Troplong and M. de Montalembert, all of which were reprinted in the *Essais de Critique*. The latter had been offered to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which had not dared to publish them. Finally an article on the spirit of the Reformation in England (recast in the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*) in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*, and the preface to the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, complete the poor total of his literary productions in 1857. The first edition of the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire* was brought out by Hachette in February 1858; it contained, besides the preface, chapters on Macaulay, Fléchier, Dickens, Guizot, Thackeray, Plato's Young Men, Saint Simon, Mme. de la Fayette, Michelet, Troplong, and Montalembert. Many changes took place in the course of the different editions, some articles being taken out

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and inserted in the *Littérature Anglaise* or elsewhere, and others being added in their place. The final edition of the first volume comprises two prefaces, and chapters on La Bruyère, Michelet, Jean Raynaud, Plato, Guizot, Xenophon, Saint Simon, Fléchier, Mme. de la Fayette, Troplong, and Montalembert.

In 1858, after a whole year's rest, Taine was able for some months to work two or three hours a day. It was at this time that he wrote his great Essay on Balzac, and revised the second edition of his *Voyage aux Pyrénées*. He also published articles on Édouard de Suckau's *Marcus Aurelius*, Racine, and Assollant in the *Débats* (the two former were reprinted in the *Nouveaux Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*), one on M. de Sacy in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique* (also republished in the *Nouveaux Essais*), and two great studies on Swift and Dryden, which appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and were afterwards reproduced in the *Littérature Anglaise*.

At the end of August 1858, M. Taine determined to seek in travel an intellectual relaxation at the same time as a cure for his continued bad health. He spent a few weeks in visiting Belgium, Holland, and the banks of the Rhine; he studied the Old Masters with some idea of writing a book on Dutch painting, but the notes taken in 1858 were not made use of until ten years later, when he gave some lectures at the École des Beaux Arts, and wrote a book on the Philosophy of Art. He returned to France by way of Cologne, Heidelberg, and Strasburg. His first impressions of Germany will be found in the course of the present work. Part of his notes on Belgium and Holland appeared in the *Revue de Paris* (June and July 1895).

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Unfortunately the relief found in travelling was not sufficient to arrest the threatening crisis. Taine soon found himself worse than before, and the year 1859 was the saddest and most barren in his life ; he seriously thought at that time that his intellectual mainspring was hopelessly broken. Sometimes he would attempt to go back to his work—a study on Addison—or to take up some interesting book, but book and pen soon fell from his hands, and he sank again into torturing idleness. Only at the end of the year was he able to begin writing again, with infinite care ; from that time onward he frequently had to bear periods of enforced rest, but never with the persistence and intensity of the first attack.

*To M. Hatzfeld.*

*Paris, February 24, 1857.*

You are indeed most kind, my dear Sir: I availed myself of your present [a ticket for the Conservatoire] and have heard the B flat Symphony. Thank you a hundred times. But why such a short letter ? it is your turn to converse with me. Remember that I have been ill for four months, with a leaden cap on my head and frequent attacks of neuralgia.

Nothing does me any good, whether it be hydrotherapeutics, ferruginous pills, or dieting. The doctors tell me to keep quiet and have patience. I have given up all kind of work. I am only trying to get the *Revue des Deux Mondes* to take in two articles written about six or eight months ago. I give three or four private lessons a week, and, in the evening, I go into society, where I yawn and talk or listen to nonsense.

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During an unexpected week's respite, I just managed to write a short article on the *Princesse de Clèves*, for the *Débats*. Do write to me and forgive me if I do not write to you. You think, you have new ideas, you read new books. Tell me what you have decided about your manuscript, and if you are writing on Thucydides at the same time. M. Villemain's mind is set on the latter subject, and he suggested that I should tackle it, but I am too ill. It would be a fine piece of work to compare the man and his country to the mediæval Italian Republics and their historians. On two occasions were the Fine Arts born in similar climates under similar Constitutions and amongst similar manners and customs. It is one of the most felicitous subjects of historical philosophy, and I should like it to fall into your hands.

Forgive this abrupt ending. I am no longer a man, but an inferior mollusc, and only suffering reminds me that I have a brain.

*To Ernest Havet.*

*Orsay, June 19, 1857.*

SIR,—An invalid who is now planting cabbages and walking five leagues [12 miles] a day, solicits your acceptance of this paper,<sup>1</sup> written eight months ago, in the time when he had a little brain left. Now nothing remains of him but a stomach, a pair of legs, and a tongue which he uses twice a week for teaching purposes; he is exerting these last faculties to the best of his capacity in order to start scribbling again as soon as possible; the doctor promises that it may be next winter.

<sup>1</sup> The article on Milton.

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And yet he has lately made some use of his poor brains, against medical orders ; but he had a good reason, which was that he found here your Pascal. It reminded him of the great kindness with which you sent him the book <sup>1</sup> when he was but a poor schoolmaster, immersed in the little meannesses of a provincial town. He has read over again this model of lucidity, criticism, psychology, and eloquence ; and he now offers you, as in the old times of the *École Normale*, a pupil's essay for a master's lesson, a Protestant for a Jansenist, a Milton for a Pascal.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Orsay, October 9, 1857.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—There are also an article on Chaucer, two on Spenser, two on Ben Jonson, and a third article on Macaulay's *History of England*.

You flatter me, but that is of course permitted on an epitaph. I no longer live ; I survive.

My principal idea was this : to write down general principles and to particularize them in great men, taking no account of the small fry. The object was to come to a definition of the English mind. I envy you your journey : you will see with your corporeal eyes what I was forced to guess.

Nothing new here. I am absolutely no better and I do not know when I can write about your *Marcus Aurelius*. I told you that Hachette was going to print a volume of my *Essays* ; I shall try to write a preface by working about a quarter of an hour a week.

Much love. Write to me from Germany, and I will

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. p. 185.

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preserve your letters, so that you can use them for a book on your return.

*To J. J. Weiss.*

*Paris, January 25, 1858.*

MY DEAR WEISS,—M. Robinet<sup>1</sup> showed me the passage in your letter which concerns me. So far from being shocked, I thank you ; though you include my writings in “brutal Literature,” they are treated honourably and in such a way as to make me wish to shake hands with you. I had understood the note about X. quite well, and I can assure you that I make a great difference between the loyalty of your criticism and the malice of his. If M. Baudelaire’s work is dangerous company, M. Flaubert’s is most wholesome : I have not read a finer novel <sup>2</sup> since Balzac.

But I regret what you say about Renan. I know him personally ; I own that his hands are too ecclesiastically gloved, but he is very eager, very devoted to his convictions, immensely learned, very rich in general ideas ; and he has with all this the refinement of an artist and of a man of the world ; he will be one of the great men of this century. I should be sorry to see a man like you, so quick, so brilliant, and so full of erudition, at war with such a man as he is. What matters a difference in your philosophies ? I adore Balzac, who was a Christian, an Absolutist, and a Mystic ; and also Beyle, who was a Liberal, a Materialist, and an Atheist. I should like all loyal, thinking, men to fraternize,

<sup>1</sup> M. Robinet was the editor of the *Revue de l’Instruction Publique*, and Weiss had just published in it an article on Taine.

<sup>2</sup> *Madame Bovary*.

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from every camp, at any distance. I do so with you, and shall for a long time, I hope.

To M. Émile Deschanel.

Paris, February 22, 1858.

DEAR SIR,—I have not yet been able to thank you for your kind thought of me;<sup>1</sup> I assure you that I appreciate it: you are indeed the École Normale master, still holding out a helping hand to his former pupils.

You see in me a convalescent who is barely able to resume work for a few hours every day. I have spent a whole year lying inert in an armchair or yawning in the sunshine of the country, unable to write and even to read. My poor machine creaks as soon as it is the least hurried. . . .

Every one tells me of your oratorical success. I might have anticipated it, remembering the way in which you translated Ulysses' speech for us. Why are you not here? Excepting M. Havet, who has the soul and power of a true orator, our classes are hospitals for old fools who are resting, or for young ones who are taking their degrees. Oh! for the good old times!! Messrs. Hachette are sending you at the *Indépendance* office some *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, which I have just published. If you do them the same honour that you did the *Philosophes Français*, will you be so kind as to inform me of it? I have not been able to read your article, and, believe me, no one needs to be criticized more than a critic.

You came to Paris about two years ago, I think? Michel Lévy gave me your address, but added that you

<sup>1</sup> M. Deschanel had published in the *Indépendance Belge* an article on the *Philosophes Français*.



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were leaving on that same day. If you should come again, may I be fortunate enough to have an opportunity of shaking hands with you ?

*To M. Émile Deschanel.*

*Paris, April 2, 1858.*

I thank you heartily, my dear master, for your most kind article.<sup>1</sup> Since you do me the honour of wishing to read the *Voyage aux Pyrénées*, do me the favour of waiting another two months. It was badly written, under unfavourable conditions. There were hardly sixty pages in it that I really cared to sign. I had been afraid of daring too much, and then, it was but a *Guide-book*. It is being reprinted, and I have recast it from beginning to end : as soon as it is published I shall have great pleasure in sending it to you and in enclosing *Titus Livius* in the parcel.

The articles on Fléchier and Plato were neither written nor prepared at the École ; but Plato is, in a great measure, extracted from my Latin thesis. *Titus Livius* is new, and was merely inspired by the charms of the *Académie*.

Many thanks for your advice and for your criticism, though it is but half indicated. I have been thinking about it, and in order to prove this to you, I will tell you in a few words how I should try to vindicate myself.

If, by a system, a hypothesis is meant, Voltaire is right a thousand times ; to suppose something which cannot be observed, such as Descartes' annelated matter or Leibnitz' monad, is ridiculous, and science purges itself every day of these fine indigestible things.

<sup>1</sup> A review of the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*.

My system, if that name can be inflicted on it, is but a law ; that is, a general fact observed a great many times in several centuries, nations, or individuals. According to all the rules of scientific induction, it may be applied to other cases not yet observed. It is not a supposition, an invention, or a gratuitous hypothesis.

All my ambition is to claim for this method a place in the sunshine. I admire painters ; I have not enough talent to become one. I am but an anatomist, and I merely contend that a scalpel should be tolerated by the side of a paint-brush.

As to what my sympathies are, I do not like to shout my confidences, like M. de Lamartine, in the open air, with trumpet and drum. Thirty million confidants are too many for my taste ; that is why, when I write, I do not take what I like into account ; the last page of the book was not ironical, but sincere. That kind of detachment is consoling : one forgets the present and many other things, and, upon my word, one often has need to forget !

By the bye, may I rectify some forgetfulness on your part ? I was not a student at the Lycée Charlemagne ; the boy whose appearance you describe was not I, unfortunately for me, probably. Your servant, my dear Sir, was a second-year student at the École Normale, on the corner of the bench on your right hand, from which place he stared at your white tie whilst poor Rieder, who thought he only had one paper to write, found that he had twenty-three, about Wolf and Homer. As for me, I wrote an essay on the First Book of the *Iliad* ; I still have your pencil-marks. I had then, and still have, a large nose, blue spectacles, and a great love for philosophical argu-

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mentation: Once I discussed Liberty with you in the middle of a lecture.

I hope you will recognize your man by his description ; and if ever a few days' leave should bring you back to Paris, be kind enough to let me know. I shall let you compare the description with the reality, and shall have the long deferred pleasure of affectionately shaking hands with you.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, April 29, 1858.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—I forgive you your four months' silence ; forgive mine of six months ! I am very far from being cured as you thought ; I work two or three hours a day, in the morning, with great precautions ; the rest of the time, I bathe in cold water. I sleep, I take a long time digesting my meals, I pay a few calls, and give a few rare lessons ; I go to bed at nine o'clock, and go into society when I am absolutely obliged. That is why I cannot write ; again forgive me.

I have spoken of your *Marcus Aurelius* to M. Villemain and M. Guizot ; I shall try through M. Meissonier<sup>1</sup> to interest M. Émile Augier in it. M. Simon will speak to M. de Rémusat, and I rely on Prévost for other Academicians. Unfortunately, M. Villemain does not seem favourably disposed : he tells me that no thesis had ever been awarded a prize, save that of Waddington Kastus, on account of the enormous sum of work which it represented (add, and because of Cousin's determination !), and that, moreover, you had not mentioned the sixteenth

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Meissonier, the painter.

century writers who have spoken of Marcus Aurelius. And there will be at least a hundred competitors for the prize ; but we shall see what we can do.

There is nothing new here, old fellow. The University is waxing more and more ferocious. The Minister himself has forbidden Weiss and Talbot to write in *Hachette's Review*. Think what that means ! Prévost is going to resume his leading articles ; M. Bertin told me so the day before yesterday. He is looking for some industrial post or some railway work ; he already has something in Swiss railways. I have missed him twice : he is always away ; perhaps he has secured some more important work. He lives at No. 8, Rue Guy Labrosse. He has lost his second daughter, and his wife has been very ill, but he is as active and energetic as ever.

About is in Italy ; he is making a lot of money out of his drama (*Germaine*) : he takes half the author's rights. But he spends a great deal. Bary told me that last year he kept an open table twice a week. His *Maître Pierre* is charming. It is the best thing he has done since the *Roi des Montagnes*.

Renan is manufacturing books, one with his *Langage* out of the *Liberté de Pensée*, another with short articles. The one on Language is a typographical curiosity—an in-8° made up of two *Review* articles ! But money must be made somehow.

I have re-written the *Voyage aux Pyrénées* from beginning to end. Hachette is printing two editions of it—one without illustrations, and an expensive one for New Year presents, with a number of pictures (by Gustave Doré). It has taken me six weeks and will bring me in a

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little money. The trouble is the censorship to which the book has to be submitted in order to be sold at railway stations. For instance, Templier<sup>1</sup> says that the following sentence must be suppressed—"I could not help thinking of the lost religions, which were so beautiful." So *beautiful* is insolent towards Christianity! I can see I am going to be worried. M. Hachette took me aside the other morning and spoke to me of my fatal tendencies, of the reports which had reached him about them, and of the advice that his friends tendered to me through him. He began by giving me fresh arguments in favour of liberty, and then went on to exhort me never to write the least allusion to Philosophy, nothing but literary criticism. "I will give you plenty of work. In two years' time, when you have thought it over, you will be cured of your errors." What do you think of that?

Poor Ed., yawning away at Bayreuth! you frighten me by what you say of the difficulty of grasping the language and its shades—I, who wanted to visit Germany in a year or two. But there you are, armed with good auditory receptacles, and in two years' time you will be careering through little courts and large towns. I think, my dear fellow, that every conversation will seem heavy and every manner of life unsociable after ours, judging from a few German men and women whom I meet here. But their ideas find other modes of expression, such as music in particular; if you study it well, the whole heart and mind of Germany reveals itself in that. I have heard and played some music by Bach, Schumann, and Mendelssohn which was worth

<sup>1</sup> M. E. T. Templier, M. Louis Hachette's son-in-law, and a partner in the firm.

all the conversations in the world. Over there, the animal dreams, feels, and grasps the whole, instead of talking, particularizing, judging, and pulling to pieces as is done here. And then you have their papers and magazines, which must give you an idea of the public taste. What is their Administration like? How is justice organized? What is the degree of knavery in your little State? How do girls get married? What careers are open to young men?—There is a great deal to notice; do not grumble, but come home with a wagon-load of facts.

I have only received the first three numbers of the *Revue Germanique*; they contained nothing of yours yet. Do not sign your contributions to it, take a pseudonym; it is in bad odour; its exegesis and its philosophy smack of heresy.

Nothing new in politics. The Opposition is lying in wait; the master is a clever, cool-headed man, but surrounded by knaves who rob him and push him along anyhow and anywhere. They let him make a mistake by those speeches against England: he effaced it as well as he could, but the irritation remained, to wit: the Bernard trial. Money is the great trouble: the reckoning will come; they are throwing cash out of the windows, the Budget is increasing, everything is taxed. At the least shock, food will become scarce; everything being dearer, officials will begin to starve. The town of Paris is already in debt; the rates will have to be increased; capitalists, hampered on all sides, will restrict their expenses; and then what will be said by the people, the working classes, for whose sake all this is supposed to be done?

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Come back and find some permanent situation next year. In our fine country one must stand firmly on one's feet, and be prepared for sudden jerks.

I have started again on my *English Literature*: it is heavy work, and I am getting on very slowly; still, I have finished a long article on Swift, and taken it to Buloz. He has to bear a good deal: the Minister has said, "We will not suffer our Professors to write for that man!"

Even though in bad health, I am getting accustomed to living; I am becoming patient, and bending my back under misfortune. I am thirty now, and my life, my work, and my future are marked out. . . . And you?

In order to continue the improvement in my health, I shall spend the summer at my sister's in the country, and come up to Paris twice a week like last year.

Do write to me! Morin, whom I met at Robinet's, talked to me about a new German philosophical tendency, a restoration of the Will *à la* Maine de Biran. You should try to meet Michelet of Berlin, the philosopher.

The *Memoirs* M. Guizot is about to publish are very fine.

I have glanced at the work of Richard Owen, the English naturalist; it is very good, an improved and elevated Geoffroy Saint Hilaire. What are the Germans saying about natural history? Moleschott and Forscher are making some stir; I have also read a good book by Kuno Fischer on Hegel's logic.

Tell me frankly what you think of Balzac, Marcus Aurelius, and Swift?

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*To his Mother.*

*Antwerp, August 29, 1858.*

: : : My journey is enjoyable. There are some fine landscapes in Flanders, and ideas come to me. I take care not to get tired.

At Brussels, M. Deschanel received me with open arms ; he asked me to dinner with Hetzel, the artist-bookseller, the author of *Bêtes et Gens* ; I spent a most delightful evening. "

Here is a diary, horribly scribbled on very bad paper : read as little of it as possible, and we will talk about it on my return.

The people here are not like Rubens' types, but more like Teniers'. One of their beefsteaks would suffice for a corporal and four men.

It is all very amusing to look at. The streets are marvellously clean. Antwerp is full of gabled houses, everything is solidly convenient and comfortable. They are very heavy and phlegmatic people, but, as a matter of fact, they make our Paris life seem very artificial.

I spend my days in the museums, the churches, the streets, and the park ; in the evening I drink beer in a tavern : to read nothing and talk to nobody really seems quite pleasant.

I am off to Ghent to-morrow for two days, then to Bruges, and to Rotterdam for one day, after which I shall be at Amsterdam.



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*To his Mother. \**

*Amsterdam, September 7, 1858.*

I am not yet bored ; on the contrary, I am doing so much that I am rather tired. To-day I have done no sight-seeing. I went to sit on the quay from ten o'clock in the morning till three o'clock in the afternoon, lounging about and looking at the pretty sea-gulls, with their delicate wings. The sea changes its colour every half-hour ; it is now of a light claret colour, then of a chalky whiteness, and again of an inky black or a yellow colour, like liquid putty. The clouds look exactly like the round and torn masses of steam issuing from a locomotive : all this is grandiose, strange, and morbid ; everything dips in water—it overflows everything. On the edge of the sky, an imperceptible band of green seems to float on the sea.

Forgive these descriptions. I am gorged with sights ; it is because you are literary that you do not care about descriptions ; these are just travelling notes.

I intend to leave the day after to-morrow ; there is still the Museum to see, and I want to make an excursion to Saardam. They are celebrating the coming of age of the hereditary Prince, and the streets are uncomfortably crowded.

I shall go to Düsseldorf, then to Cologne, taking three or four days on the way, to rest myself from towns and have some leisure for looking at the landscape. I shall stop at the most beautiful place on the Rhine, probably Koenigswinter. I have seen more than enough of pictures and street sights ; it must all sort itself in my head. But

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I am very glad that I have come on this journey without a travelling companion.

My English was useful to me at Rotterdam and here ; it seems quite strange to be amongst so many people who do not understand one. My German helps me too.

Everything here is twice as expensive as in Belgium ; the land is so poor that the same things require twice as much work to produce them.

Here are two sheets of my diary. I have picked up many ideas which I shall complete in Paris. If my health allows me to write it, I shall have an article ready prepared on the painters of this country.

I do not feel that I want to talk to anybody ; I am looking on and dreaming ; and yet the delicate sensitiveness of the first days is becoming blunted.

*To his Mother.*

*Heidelberg, September 18, 1858.*

. . . I left the rain behind me in Holland ; now that I am in Germany I am being roasted. My journey was very successful. I met people of all kinds, amongst others : a Genevese lady at Amsterdam, a model of good sense, reason, unaffected naturalness, and amiability, so different from our Frenchwomen ! Three English families on a steamer, types of rich, proud, dignified aristocracy, accustomed to wealth and authority. Some German newly-married or merely betrothed couples, kissing publicly. A good German merchant, with whom I spent an evening, which showed me details of German family life and education. A tactless and pompous German journalist. Dreamy, fair-haired girls, and buxom, blooming ones, etc., etc. I

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also made some intellectual provision. I re-read *Faust* in my spare moments ; it is incredibly true painting, and one learns to understand Goethe in his own country. This journey will have been useful to me ; it will have provided me with materials for some big article on Rubens ; I know what documents to read, and it is all becoming classified in my mind.

But, on the whole, it is not a very resting kind of life ; one sees too many things, and one wants to see many more—to note gestures, faces, clothes, etc. One feels like a *gourmet* at a feast. I, especially, with my bad eyes, have been trying to make too much use of them. You are right, I take after my father—I wish my wishes too ardently. But do not be alarmed, the machinery is working all right. I shall stay here two days longer. Heidelberg is the most delightful place in the world, situated at the opening of a valley, between two ranges of hills, wooded with oaks and pine-trees, almost twice as high as the Orsay hills. My room looks out on the valley, and, since yesterday, I have been walking along the pretty peaceful roads which wind along the hillside.

I shall probably spend three days at Baden. When I leave Strasburg I shall go to Senones. I shall be there on the 25th, and remain there a week ; so that I shall be back in Paris at the beginning of October.

The towns along the Rhine—Cologne, Mayence and Frankfort—are not beautiful ; ugly churches, no pictures. The Netherlanders are artists and epicureans at heart ; the cleanliness, comfort, beautiful and harmonious colouring, and easy, well-fed life in their country, are a pleasure to look at. Here, there is nothing of the kind ; but the Rhine

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is admirable. I stopped at Koenigswinter and at Bingen, where the view is most beautiful ; the river flows between solid mountains which enclose it like two walls ; those walls are cracked, blackened, torn asunder, scattered over with ruined castles perched on narrow heights ; the expanse of blue or green water, broad as a lake, gleams in the brilliant sunlight, and, in the evening, the rippling surface assumes a red or golden glow, like a stream of molten metal. Yet you must not imagine that I have been living in raptures ; I often felt the heat oppressive, my eyes tired and my limbs heavy ; save for one or two moments, it was rather a quiet, well-fed reverie, such as one enjoys in bed, in the morning, after a good night's rest. Pleasures of the mind are always purely accidental for me. Last winter I used to have most vivid sensations at the sight of the sunrise on the quays. It is the same with pictures and churches—they please me more on account of the novel ideas which they suggest to me than by their own beauty. I am a critic, and not an artist.

Here is a page of my diary ; after Rotterdam I gave it up. . . . After all, this lantern-slide sort of life in coaches and inns would become wearisome if it were to last more than a month.

*Notes on Germany.*

*Senones, September 27, 1858.*

Here are my remarks on Germany ; but I only saw the north-western corner of it as I passed through : : :

The German is quite primitive ; he gives himself up to the first impulse. No contracted habit, no reflective passion can moderate this course ; his naturalness contrasts with English pride and French vanity. In the middle of an

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impulse, an Englishman thinks of what he owes to himself; a Frenchman of what others will think; the German does not stop to think. Thence a great deal of kindness, *naïveté*, grace, and a certain amount of silliness. They are rather childish! For instance, I saw two or three fits of anger; amongst others, a soldier, furious with a stranger who had trespassed on some ground; he fairly bellowed, his voice sounded like thunder. I thought of Châteaubriand's barbarians. It is the same with love and the affections: sentiments here are pure, whether they proceed from violence, gentleness, generosity, or foolishness. It is an uncontaminated water; the race is at its source, it is not yet transformed. Perhaps that may be the cause of the resemblance between writing and pronunciation; the roots and ideas have not been twisted here as they are in French or in English.

I emphasize the observation I had formerly made. Love here is infinitely open and innocent. Two rich and well dressed *fiancés*, at Heidelberg, really astonished me; their manners were those of a student with a bold barmaid. *Unschuld*, said my right-hand neighbour; people were looking at them complacently: such complacence indicates a good heart and some imagination; but, good heavens! what an education must that be which allows a girl of twenty to remain such an absolute child! If her children die, if her husband ruins himself or breaks his neck, what will she have to lean on? No personal, practised will, no clear and disillusioned experience of the world, no reasoning or ordering capacity. The ideal helpmeet is the Genevese lady I met at Amsterdam: no airs, no French vanity, a little limited in mind, but sensible, steady, reflecting,

capable of giving good advice and of receiving and following it; her husband's lieutenant, ready to take the captain's place if he should fall. Goethe is a great painter; I have been reading his *Faust* over again, his Gretchen is admirably true to nature; to love, to yield, to weep, to dream, to suffer and to die—such is the destiny of all the German girls I have met for the last month.

His village and drinking scenes are absolutely German, and deep, but quite false in France. Those drinkers speak of love and feel it; for us it would be mere gallantry. They sing or listen to songs which stir their imagination and seem dull to us, without point or wit. They roar and bellow coarsely like bulls or bears; their temperament is stronger than ours. Their laugh is a burst of physical well-being, or the calm smile of a well filled stomach; whereas, with us, laughter is the spark from the sudden shock of droll ideas; they digest, we gambol. Valentine, in order to draw his sword, has to shake himself, to pull himself together noisily; we do not take so long about it. they are more *natural* than we are, more corporeal, more slow.

Nothing is funnier than soldiers at drill, or the signalmen on railways, shouldering arms. They do so with their body conscientiously stiff and mathematically straight, without a thought for military swagger. A German must fight from conscience and to obey orders, a Frenchman from vanity and for the honour of it.

Between Bingen and Coblenz, I conversed with a journalist from Frankfort and with a merchant. They have common-sense, but no wit; twice they attempted a joke with a most amusing self-satisfaction and delight. The journalist, who had a limp, said to me, "Perhaps you have not noticed

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my foot ; I am a lame devil." There was nothing diabolical about him at all ! The merchant arrived with me at the fort of Stolberg, after a long walk, only to find a closed door. After thinking for a moment, he rubbed his hands, and said to me, gleefully, " We have been to Rome, and we have not seen the Pope." These two rhetorical exploits filled them with pride.

The journalist (a third-rate one) looks like an old, shabby *savant* ; in France he would look Bohemian. A good-natured fellow ; he played with the other man's little girl, whom he called Clärchen, with quite a touching gentleness. There is a deep layer of imaginative feeling in all of them, they are certainly better hearted than we are, It is always the same mixture—conscientiousness with a grain of silliness. I read many of their papers : newly married couples announce their union among the advertisements ; a father " has the honour to announce to his friends that his wife, Elizabeth So-and-So, *née* So-and-So, has been delivered of a healthy boy." There is no ridicule to put an end to foolishness. But conscientiousness redeems everything. Their articles on criticism, correspondence, accounts, etc., are far better than ours ; there is no chit-chat, no effort to make the reader laugh, no tirades to compel his admiration. A solid, accurate and complete *résumé* ; the journalist has read the whole book, understands the subject, and saves you the trouble of reading it.

They are ten times more learned than we are, and in a better way ; and yet that last word is not absolutely true. Many German minds are mere bookshelves, accumulations of facts. A gentleman whom I met at Strasburg was making a series of walking tours ; He had been in

Norway, in the Carpathians, and had brought back some blisters and no ideas. Another amuses himself by learning the Berber or Copt languages. They are gluttons rather than *gourmets* in science.

My merchant is an excellent man ; he has told me about his family life, and the care that his wife takes of him ; how every one is happy around him when he is, etc. Naturally, I made myself the Devil's advocate. I described to him our arranged marriages, the coldness between husband and wife, the custom of having but one or two children, the custom of going into society in the evening, the double families of the Belgians and Dutch. He was horrified, and raised his hands to heaven. They must be most happy and most proper in their family life !

They are full of common sense, and speak nicely, justly, and thoughtfully—a great contrast with two French families I met, one at the *table d'hôte* at the Hague and the other at the Amsterdam Museum, chattering, grumbling, expressing in loud tones their conventional admiration for the pictures, obviously stupid and bored. Why are vulgar French people so ridiculously vain ?

Roughly speaking, the following are the three most striking points in Germans : First, the phlegmatic temperament (dull sensations, slow actions, too much water in the blood), which is also common to the English, the Flemish, and the Dutch. Secondly, a conscientious habit of obeying orders given, even when self-inflicted ; it is useful to Englishmen in their political and public life, and to the Flemish in their industry and cleanliness. Finally—and this is essentially German—primitive feelings. The English, the Flemish, and the Dutch have exerted some



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influence on Nature and on Society ; the Germans have remained in their original state, excluded from the sea, from political business, from practical comfort, absorbed in dreams and in science. No race has remained so *young*, a word which includes both good and evil.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, November 20, 1858.*

DEAR ÉDOUARD,—We both are to blame, but you especially. You never answered my last letter, and yet you are in good health.

I am still suffering very much, dear friend, especially from headaches. I can barely read or write for two hours in the morning ; the rest of the day, I try to resist boredom and kill time as best I can. I reserve those two precious hours for my English Literature, but I am asked on all sides for various articles. Vacherot has written two fat volumes on Metaphysics, which do not please me much ; they are a mere decoction of Hegel, watered down and only half understood, without any knowledge of positive science ; the Cousin school, even in its renegades, always remains steeped in milk-and-water generalization. Rigault is ill, like myself. Sarcey writes in the *Figaro*, under the name of Suttières. About is finishing a novel and a play. Renan is finishing his Semitic languages, and about to publish a translation from the Book of Job. That is all I can tell you of any interest.

Write to me at length ; do not let us drift away from each other. What did you do in Germany ? What did you learn there ? What are you studying at present ? What hopes have you of success in your University career ?

1857-1859

Talk to me, who cannot talk to you. Life is drawing us away from each other. Prévost is cold to me on account of his political passion ; he is shocked at my indifference and absorption in other things.

I went to Belgium and Holland in September and October, and returned by way of the Rhine. I saw a great many pictures, and picked up some ideas on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance ; but I did not get well, which was my main object, and I am still forced to spend my life walking up and down the quays.

There is no excitement here ; in politics, some people resign themselves and others sleep. The *Univers* continues to make a great deal of noise, and is looked upon with curiosity as a turbulent buffoon ; there is no flag of any kind ; students think of their examinations and other young men of their careers. It is all somewhat dull, and my greatest pleasure is the conversation of specialists ; but what can one learn when one has to go to bed at nine o'clock ? My life is more on provincial lines than your own.

Again, dear Ed., do write to me !!

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Orsay, January 30, 1859.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—You see that I am obliged to dictate this letter ; you were right, alas ! and I am laid low, forbidden to read or write, and dreadfully bored. I spent a month in the South, at Hyères, Marseilles and Nîmes ; at present I am in the country ; I dig in the garden, go out driving, and play with my little niece.

Thank you for your pretty speeches ; they are nothing

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but pretty speeches, made to you because you are known to be a friend of mine. Prévost carries a political flag ; About is making 30,000fr. (£1,200), and selling his *Mariages de Paris* by 40,000 copies. I am not so fortunate.

I think you are wrong to pass those Law examinations, it is a busy way of wasting one's time. At your age, you should be producing ; it is the only way of increasing one's knowledge. You should do again what you did for Marcus Aurelius, taking as your subject some of those almost unknown German literary philosophers, such as Jean-Paul, Lessing, Jacobi, or Schleiermacher. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* will take it in, and it will help you to reach Paris and the Faculties sooner.

About is writing a book on Italy, against the Pope. Prévost is not very well ; his wife has had a son ; he went back to Aix on the 15th.

I am living the life of a mollusc ; I no longer have any pupils ; I avoid thinking, talking, etc. I was very sorry for myself at first, and anxious for my future, but I have been lecturing myself and have regained my moral equilibrium.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Orsay, June 30, 1859.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—I am a little better, not much, but able to read an hour a day ; perhaps I may try, very slowly, to finish my work on Addison for the *Débats*.

I walk about in the woods, miserably enough ; my reprints are dragging along ; you can imagine what my life is, like an engine without a boiler, fast becoming eaten up with rust.

Your article in the *Revue Germanique* is full of interesting facts, but, in my opinion, not sufficiently systematic ; there is no climax ; it leads to no great general idea of the difference between France and Germany, or the character of primitive poetry, etc. You will say that I am riding my hobby again ! but it really is necessary to demonstrate a thesis or to make a discovery, if you want to avoid common-places.

Prévost-Paradol did not send me his book ; I have not read the introduction. About's book (*la Question Romaine*) is amusing, but somewhat weak ; only six thousand copies have passed the frontier, so that he will not have made much money. It now costs 15fr. a copy, in Paris.

I congratulate you on the glorious part which you take in church processions. Sanctify yourself, my friend, and you will be made a Philosophy Professor in Paris.

There is nothing new here, in myself or my surroundings ; I am reading translations from the Chinese, because they are dull, and also because they unlock fresh cupboards in one's mind. Those good people, three thousand years ago, with their dry algebraic language, had invented our abstract Pantheism : the Tao, or Abstract and Generating Reason of all things. But, for lack of positive science, they had not gone further than that first step. It pleases me to find in India and in China a confirmation of my ideas on the connexion between the different orders of development which compose a civilization.

The Emperor is very clever ; he is like Meyerbeer, who brings out a new work once in every three years, in order to keep a high place in the opinion of the public : that is the way to reign in France.

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To J. J. Weiss.

Paris, December 20, 1859.

MY DEAR WEISS,—I congratulate you most sincerely on your review,<sup>1</sup> and thank you for it. It is what I may call definition in criticism. You have succeeded in pleasing whilst speaking some home truths, and in making yourself agreeable whilst remaining independent.

As a matter of fact, I agree with your reproaches. I am not an artist, and have never pretended to be one. I apply physiology to moral matters, that is all ; I borrow from philosophy and the positive sciences methods which seem to me powerful, and I make use of them in psychological science. I treat sentiments and ideas as if they were functions or organs ; moreover, I believe that the two orders of facts partake of the same nature, are submitted to equal necessities, and are but the two sides of one individual, which is the Universe. That is all. Faults proceed from the same cause as merits, and I willingly acknowledge the former ; my sole ambition is to give expression to my idea. As to the form, it is but a means of making myself understood, and I hold it very cheap.

This article and that on Prévost seem to me so very good, that I should like to read them to M. Bertin. If you like, I will speak of them to M. Cuvillier Fleury ; he will not be afraid to read just two articles, especially concerning two of his contributors. Your two bulky parcels were probably too large.

<sup>1</sup> Weiss had published in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique* an article on the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*.

1857-1859

In any case, I think I can promise you that your admittance to the *Débats* is only deferred ; there are one or two over-ripe fruits which will drop ; one or two places are very badly filled at present. I can see the corner intended for you ; you will come into it sooner or later.

I am much better, and able to work for a few hours every day.

## CHAPTER IV

1860-1863

First Visit to England—Completion of the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. Other writings : Articles, Étienne Mayran, *Les Lois en Histoire*—Appointment to the Post of Examiner for the Military School of St. Cyr—Society Acquaintances—First Articles in the *Vie Parisienne*—Correspondence and Notes

TOWARDS the end of 1859, the state of M. Taine's health was sufficiently improved to allow of his completing his essay on Addison. He had also written a preface for the second edition of the *Philosophes Français* and an article on Jules Simon's *Liberté de Conscience*.

At the beginning of 1860, he almost entirely rewrote his thesis on La Fontaine's fables, which he looked upon as an imperfect sketch in which the development of his thoughts had been hampered by the official difficulties which have been set forth in the preceding volume. Four great sections of it were inserted in the *Journal des Débats*

(April and May, 1860), and this third edition, which was almost like a new work, appeared in 1861 under its present title : *La Fontaine et ses Fables*. A few weeks later a great study appeared, on Comedy in England under the Restoration.

All the materials for the *Littérature Anglaise* were now collected, but some important parts of it still remained to be written and the whole had to be co-ordinated to form a complete plan. M. Taine came to the conclusion that, in order to produce a living work, he could not content himself with the information to be found in books, which indeed he now completely possessed, but that it was necessary also to study the life and customs of the race on the spot, and to see with his own eyes the soil from which it had grown. He therefore went to England for the first time in June, 1860, and stayed there for two months.

Very few letters dated from that visit and from subsequent travels will be found in this volume. He worked very hard, visiting museums and churches, and reading for hours at a time in the British Museum, in order to analyze a few old writers, whose works were not to be found in the Paris libraries. He saw a great many people of all classes, and explored the suburbs and the provinces. In the evenings, he would cover little note-books with his fine, close handwriting, putting together the information and impressions gathered in the course of the day. He only sent to his family short letters of everyday news, reserving his notes for their perusal on his return. Those little note-books, so full of facts concerning English life, first of all went to make up the concluding chapter of the fourth volume of the *Littérature Anglaise*; eleven years



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later, in answer to repeated demands from his friends, he rewrote them and published them, with the title : *Notes sur l'Angleterre*.

On his return from London, Taine wrote his essay on Carlyle, and, in the beginning of the year 1861, those on John Stuart Mill and Tennyson. The two former, which ultimately became chapters of the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, were published separately by Germer Baillière and entitled : *l'Idéalisme Anglais, étude sur Carlyle*, and *Le Positivisme Anglais, étude sur Stuart Mill*. The three years which followed this first visit to England were almost exclusively given up to the preparing of his great work ; he published separate parts of it in succession, filling up the lacunæ of his anterior work, and making fresh studies of the periods which he had not yet treated. Thus, in 1861, he published *Les Mœurs et les Lettres à la fin du XIII<sup>ème</sup> Siècle en Angleterre*, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* ; in 1862 : *Les Poètes Anglais au XVIII<sup>ème</sup> Siècle*, in the *Débats* ; *Les Saxons en Angleterre, leurs mœurs et leur poésie, La Réforme en Angleterre au XVI<sup>ème</sup> Siècle* in the *Revue Nationale* ; *La Poésie Moderne en Angleterre*, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* ; and *Chaucer et son Temps*, in the *Débats*. After a second journey to England in the summer of 1862, he brought out in 1863 : *Les Mœurs et les Lettres en Angleterre au Moyen-Age* and *Le Théâtre Anglais de la Renaissance*, in the *Revue Germanique* ; *Les Poètes Anglais de la Renaissance* and *Les Prosateurs Anglais de la Renaissance*, in the *Journal des Débats*, to be succeeded later by the aforementioned articles entitled, *Voyage en Angleterre* ; a second essay on *Milton*, completing that which had appeared in 1857 ; finally, the celebrated

introduction to the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise* which was to raise such a storm of polemics. It first came out in the *Revue Germanique* under the following title : *L'Histoire, son Présent et son Avenir*.

The great work which had absorbed seven years of Taine's life was now completed, and the first three volumes were sent to the *Académie Française* on December 31, 1863, for the Bordin prize competition. The last volume, *Les Contemporains*, only appeared in October of the following year. The book was dedicated to M. F. Guizot, to whom Taine was glad to offer a public testimony of gratitude.

The production of such a great and far-reaching work was a serious undertaking, which took up all his spare time ; so that he almost entirely gave up criticism, and we have but a few essays to mention in connexion with this period of his life. One in January, 1861, on M. Jules Rémy's *Voyage au Pays des Mormons*, and one on M. Cornélis de Witt's *Jefferson*, which appeared in the *Journal des Débats*, and afterwards in the *Nouveaux Essais de Critique et d'Histoire* ; others, on Cournot and Ritter, were not re-published. In 1862 he only produced an article on Victor Duruy's *Grèce Ancienne* and one on M. Camille Selden's novel, *Daniel Vlady*.

He was again in weak health at this time, and, during a period of holidays and rest, encouraged by the example of many *Normaliens*, he tried his hand at novel-writing. He always had great appreciation of that particular branch of literature ; his great essay on Balzac and his admiration for Stendhal are well known. He appears to have taken the latter for his model, if we are to judge by the eight

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chapters of *Étienne Mayran*, which are all that was finished of that work. They begin the story of a poor, orphaned and friendless schoolboy, precociously intelligent and morbidly sensitive ; his surroundings, boarding-school and college, masters and schoolfellows, are personal reminiscences mixed with recollections of the youth of Stendhal's *Julien*. We have no plan of the whole, and only know that the hero, when he reached manhood, was intended, like Julien Sorel, to mix in the best Parisian society. Taine, however, soon abandoned his enterprise, perhaps because he wished to reserve all his intellectual forces for the *Littérature Anglaise*, perhaps because he feared to fall into autobiography, so contrary to his habits of reserve, more probably because he was conscious of his own impotence. Indeed he was often heard to say that he had no creative faculties, and this conviction on his part may have been partly due to this unsuccessful attempt.

He had preserved from his youth the habit of self-analysis, and of examining his literary and philosophical conscience ; this habit was a satisfaction to his intellectual probity and scientific scruples. We have found in some note-books, dated in 1862, some precious notes on the judgment he passed on himself at that time which will be found a few pages further. We also found in the same note-books a sketch of the work he intended to attempt after the completion of his *History of English Literature*. Besides *l'Intelligence*, which was ever in his mind, but which he did not dare to touch on account of his present mental fatigue, another subject attracted him, and had done so ever since he had read Hegel's first volumes at the *École Normale* ; this was the *Lois en Histoire*, of which he had

sketched out the plan on several occasions ; one plan of it is to be found in an 1861 note-book ; an essay, written in 1862, *La Religion et la Société en France*, belongs to the same order of ideas.<sup>1</sup> Those projects were never realized, but the ideas which were at that time fermenting in his brain are to be met with in all his ulterior works:

He had by that time, as we have already seen, entirely given up private teaching ; but he realized to what extent exclusive and immoderate work in his study and in libraries was telling on his strength. He therefore wished to find some post, which, whilst allowing him to keep the greater part of his time for personal work, might offer him some lighter and less trying occupation. Already in 1861 there had been some question of appointing him to a Literature class at the Military School of St. Cyr ; the prejudices which had prevailed against him had somewhat abated. M. Guizot had energetically supported his candidature, and the Minister of Public Education, M. Rouland, seemed particularly well disposed ; but the Minister for War decided to keep the present holder of the appointment. In the following year, the corresponding post at the École Polytechnique having become vacant, Taine's friends thought of it for him ; MM. Sainte-Beuve, Ernest Havet, Saint-Marc Girardin, Renan, Joseph Bertrand, Michel, Chevalier, etc., opened the campaign. Princess Mathilde, herself, to whom he had been presented by Sainte-Beuve and who always welcomed him with extreme kindness, worked in his favour ; but, again on this occasion, former prejudices against his doctrines were re-awakened, and he failed.

At last, in March 1863, the zealous friends who sur-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix IV. p. 327.

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rounded him succeeded in getting him appointed as Admission Examiner to the school of St. Cyr. This post had the great advantage of requiring but three months' work every year and of necessitating examination tours all over France, which forced him to suspend in summer the exhausting work to which he had subjected himself. His functions began in July, but he prepared himself for it as early as the month of April; he wrote on April 27 : " I am deep in German, morning and evening, and making visible progress. I can now read Mommsen fluently, but I shall also have to polish up History : : : "

A few weeks after Tainé's appointment, Mgr. Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, published his *Avertissement à la jeunesse et aux pères de famille*, a violent attack against the doctrines professed by Littré, Maury, Renan and Tainé. The *Journal des Débats* defended them in two letters published in April, letters in the composing of which the accused writers had certainly had a part. This incident caused a sensation and was the source of some further difficulties which Tainé was destined to encounter at the Académie and elsewhere.

He had, by that time, slightly modified his recluse habits and had of late years frequented more society. Besides the late afternoons at the *Journal des Débats* which are recounted in his articles on M. de Sacy and on M. Édouard Bertin, he was one of the most frequent guests of the eminent artist who had, in 1854, become the manager of the paper. M. Bertin treated him with particular affection and esteem, and his colleagues at the *Débats* office laughingly termed him " the favourite." Those Thursday evening parties, presided over with infinite

grace, kindness and tact by the mistress of the house, were the rendezvous of all the distinguished politicians, writers and artists in the Opposition. Besides MM. de Sacy, Cuvillier Fleury, Jules Janin, John Lemoinne, Saint-Marc Girardin, Léon Say, Philarète Chasle, Michel Chevalier, Renan, Weiss, Prévost-Paradol, and the other contributors to the *Journal des Débats*, M. Bertin often entertained Count and Countess d'Haussonville, Berlioz, Gounod, Reyer, Dr. and Madame Trélat, Henry Lehmann, Eugène Delacroix, Bénouville, Amaury Duval, Guizot, Jules Simon, Ernest Picard, etc.

Taine also attended the literary gatherings of Countess d'Haussonville, the more exclusively political meetings at M. Guizot's house, and met the élite of English society as well as great French *savants* and cosmopolitan philologists in Mrs. Mohl's rooms. He was also invited to President Benoît-Champy's delightful afternoon At-homes, where the best Parisian artistes and cleverest amateurs gave exquisitely refined performances; finally he was a favoured guest in the *salon* of H.I.H. Princess Mathilde, ever open to any man who was likely to be an honour to France, whatever his political opinions might be, and where the Princess only seemed aware of her high position when it enabled her to be of service to a friend. Beyond these private receptions, Taine regularly attended the literary dinners at the Magny Restaurant, those celebrated Tuesdays presided over by Sainte-Beuve, so often and so badly described. Renan, Berthelot, Tourgueneff, Théophile Gautier, Flaubert, About, Prince Napoleon, George Sand, Schérer, Paul de Saint Victor, and the Goncourt brothers were regular members of these

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convivial gatherings. Others have protested against the picture drawn by Edmond de Goncourt of the Magny dinners ; it is enough that we should state what H. Taine was heard to say, after reading the Memoirs : " If we had had such dull conversation as that, neither my friends nor I would have gone there three times ! "

Often, when coming home from these meetings or from private calls, Taine would take up his little note-books, and describe a brilliant reception, take notes of an interesting talk, an artistic sensation or a picturesque incident which he had seen or heard of. These notes were shown to Marcelin, who, when he founded the *Vie Parisienne*, begged his friend to touch up those little unfinished sketches for his new paper. Taine consented to do so, chiefly out of friendship for Marcelin, whose success he ardently desired, and even further studied the divers aspects of fashionable life in Paris with a view to these articles. The first instalment of those *Notes sur Paris* appeared in the opening number of the *Vie Parisienne* in January 1867, under the pseudonym of Frédéric Thomas Graindorge.

*To M. Alloury.*<sup>1</sup>

*March 5, 1860.*

DEAR SIR,—This letter concerns the article which you have just published on the *Philosophes Français du XIXème Siècle*. I am aware that it is with an ill grace that a writer can appeal against judgment, and it would be doubly un-

<sup>1</sup> M. Alloury had, in 1853, published an article on Taine's thesis in the *Débats*, and now wrote two articles in the same paper on the *Philosophes Français*

gracious on my part to appeal against yours. You have wrapped it up in kindly attenuations ; you once were my " literary sponsor," and I note with pleasure that you consent to retain this title. All these reasons should deprive me of the right of answering you ! but, as a matter of fact, they give me this right, and you yourself will accord it to me when I prove to you that I am no such adversary as you seem to think.

There is a word which you have spared me, " so as to add no venom " ; but you do not spare the feeling. Politeness and kindness have arrested the name " materialist " on your lips, but all your readers have pronounced it. My dear master, I am not a materialist. I thought I had proclaimed what is the school to which I belong often and loudly enough not to be classified with one to which I do not belong. I did not think that any one, in these days, could confound Hobbes with Hegel and Helvetius with Spinoza. They are the two extremes, and, as a rule, if they are linked together, it is intentionally, in order to make the one responsible for the discredit incurred by the others. From any one but you, this confusion would seem voluntary, and I should see war tactics in it if I had not experienced your good faith and your sincerity. The two philosophical systems which they are trying to confuse into one contradict each other in spirit and in method, in metaphysics and in ethics, in sentiment and in style. What is materialism really ? A sort of negative and destructive common sense which principally consists in suppressing beautiful truths and in debasing noble things. To say with Hobbes or with Helvetius that all beings are bodies ; that those bodies are agglomerations of little balls or cubes



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diversely affixed to each other ; that Sentiment is but the thrill of a little whitish filament ; that Thought is the secretion of a flabby little tube ; that " the Good," the Supreme Right, is the preservation of our life and limbs, these are coarse, tangible ideas, which reduce the grandeur and delicacy of human nature to horrid anatomical specimens, just as they reduce the magnificence and harmony of Eternal Nature to the pell-mell of a heap of small marbles shaken in a basket. But, seriously, can any one attribute such vulgarity to the Stoics, to Spinoza and to Hegel ? I have in this very paper set forth the doctrine of a Stoic, Marcus Aurelius : can any one deny that he considered Reason as the Soul and Organizer of the world, as the Substance and the Sovereign of Man ? It is enough to have turned the pages of Spinoza to know that he looks on Divine Thought as absolutely distinct from the Infinite Extension which it represents, and on Human Thought, as absolutely distinct from the limited body which it reflects. Must I finally repeat, after so many others, that for Hegel, Mind, that is, the system of great ideas which compose Philosophy, Religion and Art, is the principle, as well as the object of things, that everything ends in or derives from it, that all Force is its preparation, sketch or image, that it is the motive power of all changes, the reason of all lives, and that the whole world hangs from it like a chain from its magnet ? You say that the touchstone of a system is its doctrine on Mind ; do not, therefore, bracket together a philosophy which reduces Mind to the vibration of a pulp, and a philosophy which erects it into the cause of the Universe. Those are two opposite conclusions, from two opposite methods. The one consists in crushing all delicate truths under a few

brutal facts—the other in disentangling from the heart of things the fine thread which connects them with each other : the first dwells on the letter—the second penetrates to the spirit ; if any men ever were Spiritualists in the true sense of the word, they were the thinkers whose cause I now defend. They worship the Ideal, but do not coarsen it into allegories. They try to understand Supreme Beauty, but do not imprison it within images. They place a Supreme and Creating Reason at the source and at the end of all things, but do not require to personify it in order to grasp it. They may actually be your allies, for they ascribe to human life the same object as you do ; they go towards the same goal by a different road ; their road is barely distant from yours by the breadth of a metaphor. They translate your old opinions into new formulæ, but the sense remains the same because the feeling has not changed. It is by such intimate likenesses that an association, a “ Church,” if you like, of very different minds may subsist and live. There is a narrow orthodoxy to unite people who recite the same creed, there also is a broad one to assemble men who participate in the same spirit. At the most glorious moment of the German renovation, Schleiermacher, a translator of Plato, a minister of the Christian gospel, declared himself a disciple of Spinoza without having to separate himself from those who preserved their liberal beliefs. I yearn after similar tolerance, and the object of this letter is to obtain it. I should feel too many regrets if I thought myself entirely cut apart intellectually from those to whom I am bound by friendship and esteem. It is the peculiar property of the philosophy which is mine that it enables one to perceive the links which connect it

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with yours ; it is not one of its least merits in my sight ; it is at least one of the reasons which encourage me in its service.

*To his Mother.*

*London, June 25, 1860.*

This great London wearies and saddens me ; I am actively pursuing my task as an anatomist, but that is all. Everything here is too large, too black, too much heaped up ; everywhere the traces of work and effort are apparent. The contrasts even hurt me. Those fair young women, so fresh, so magnificently dressed, surrounded with so much luxury, seem to me like exaggerated, showy flowers, produced by artificially enriched soil. I have just been walking in Hyde Park, and my eyes ache from seeing brilliant silks and muslins, laces, golden belts, and dazzling complexions. I am writing from the Athenæum, a large club of which I have been made a member for a month. I have seen Parliament, Schools, Universities, Prisons, and met some writers. I went to stay in the country with a reverend clergyman, who married one of Lord Campbell's daughters and who lives in the prettiest nest in the world, with 30,000 francs (£1,200) a year. At the Athenæum I read the works of all kinds of theologians, historians and erudite scholars ; I am getting saturated with facts, like a sponge. I still go to bed early—an invalid habit. I have dined out five or six times and have met some charming women ; Miss T——, the novelist's daughter, and Lady C——, the wife of my new friend, have shown me a warm-hearted cordiality which touched me very much ; and it is quite

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a pleasure to meet with such true kindness and perfect simplicity.

In ten or twelve days' time I shall go to Manchester to see the workmen and the supports of this great political machine.

*To Édouard de Suckau:*

*London Athenæum Club, July 5, 1860.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—I have now been in London for nearly three weeks, and I have made the best use I could of my time. The people for whom I had letters have received me very well ; I have often dined out and have been studying the customs of this country. I have been to Oxford, Richmond, Woodstock and Puttenham ; I have visited villages, small towns, a large town, a University, prisons, schools, clubs, etc., etc. I shall come home full of facts ; I am going to Manchester and to Liverpool to complete my impressions with the sight of the working classes. If I have enough time, I shall go as far as Scotland, where Sir John Clark, the son of the Queen's physician, has invited me to meet him ; he is a charming man and full of ideas.

I am reading vigorously at the Athenæum, of which I have been made a member ; I read the writings of theologians, historians, preachers, philosophers. Stuart Mill's *Logic* and Bain's *Physiological Psychology* are much praised here ; they have some merit, but they are not geniuses. On the contrary, Dr. Jowett (Master of Balliol College) and Dean Stanley (of Westminster), whom I visited at Oxford, are very advanced historians and critics—almost German.

It would take too long to write all I want to tell you ; on

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my return I will show you some little note-books covered with scribblings. My impression on the whole is bewilderment. Never has so much been done, so much power exerted on man and on matter ; yet there are two or three big reservations to make. My journey will have been fruitful ; what pleases me especially is that the formulæ I drew from History and Literature turn out to be correct. The principal point to be altered is the idea that English people are stiff and disagreeable. No one could be kinder. Tell Prévost that he is much liked here, and that his condemnation is thought quite odious.<sup>1</sup> Serious people have said to me, " We would build him a bridge of gold if he would come to us." I did not write him my sympathy ; I hope that he knows it, and that the expression of it was needless between us.

*To Guillaume Guizot.*

*Manchester, July 15, 1860.*

MY DEAR GUILLAUME,—I have just spent a month in London in the most agreeable and useful manner, thanks to your, M. Guizot's, and de Witt's letters. Sir John Clark especially has been most kind to me ; I am delighted with him, and, according to his account, he does not dislike me. He wants me to join him in Scotland. Dean Milman and Dean Stanley have shown me Oxford, and given me every possible information on the University and on theology. Mr. Milnes also took me under his care, and piloted me from the Houses of Parliament and Lord Palmerston's house to the Ragged Schools. I have read, looked and listened to

<sup>1</sup> Prévost-Paradol had just been sentenced to a year's imprisonment on account of a pamphlet entitled *Les Anciens Partis*.

the best of my ability ; I have seen the House of Lords, the House of Commons, Harrow and Eton, prisons and hospitals, religious and charitable meetings, aristocratic and middle-class *salons*, museums and parsonages, clubs and libraries, four or five villages and towns near London, and all sorts of people, especially distinguished people. All this I owe to you, my dear fellow, and I thank you most heartily.

I will not tell you to-day of my conclusions ; I am letting my ideas rest and crystallize themselves at the bottom of my memory. I keep a small diary, full of passing impressions, which you can see if you like. At present I am at Manchester, where one of my friends is showing me the working classes. All I can say is that I have acquired great esteem for literature and the information to be found in it ; it seems to me that the judgments which it suggested to me in Paris were not false ; the sight of things did not belie the views previously formed in my study ; it confirmed, defined and developed them, but the general formulæ remain in my opinion entirely the same.

I conclude therefrom that the opinions which we can form on Ancient Greece and Rome, on Italy, Spain and England in the Renaissance are exact, and that a historian can find in books a very powerful instrument, a sort of very faithful photograph, almost always capable of taking the place of the physical sight of things.

On one point I should like to contradict you ; your article in the *Débats* speaks of the stiffness of English people ; you say, I think, that each of them walks about surrounded by a sort of fence which renders him inaccessible to his neighbours. Well, for my part, I have found in them men as affable and as communicative as Frenchmen ; I do not

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only mean those people to whom you had introduced me ; good manners and the desire to please you would naturally make them kind to me. But everywhere, on the coach or on the steamer, in town or in the country, people seemed to me pleasant and obliging. Constantly, when I asked for information from passing strangers, people have gone out of their way to help me, people, I mean, of every class, gentlemen or poor devils in cloth or in rags ; again and again they have entered into conversation with me about the weather, the band, the Emperor, and other subjects. It also seemed to me that they talked and laughed with each other willingly enough, even when they did not know each other. I do not find them duller than the French, and I should say they are as civil. On the whole they seem to have tougher nerves than we have, they are more difficult to move and fonder of coarse amusements, noisy hurrahs and physical joy. The *Merrie England*, about which the sixteenth century writers tell us, still subsists, and we are mistaken in thinking it submerged in business and Protestantism.

I am afraid, my dear friend, that I may not be able to come and thank you at the Val-Richer this summer, as I had hoped to do. I shall be in Paris at the end of July, and my mother has to go to the Ardennes at that time, when my escort may be useful. If you have any leisure. write me a word, if only to tell me how you are spending this happy summer and to give me news of Cornélis and of all your family. For this week, my address is 5, Beaufort Terrace, Cecil Street, Manchester, c/o M. Seillière ; if your letter should arrive too late, it will be forwarded.

Kindly present my respects and thanks to M. Guizot,

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and accept a hearty handshake for yourself and for Cornélis.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, January 1861.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—Your letter has indeed grieved me! You must take care of yourself, dear friend, and give up your shop if there is anything the matter with your lungs; health should come before everything. But what do you tell me of your public classes? Does disgust make you exaggerate? I thought they were frequented by the “best” people at Angers, and Goumy had told me that your first lecture had had great success! What are your authorities like—your Rector, your Principal, etc.? : : : are they men of the world? do they understand how you ought to be treated? It is most disgraceful; no wonder so many leave France. Barni is now Professor of History, and Denis at Turin. Do take care of yourself, and let me know how you are.

I have been rather worried since you left. *Stuart Mill* will come out on the 15th, I think, but I have lost two months over it, and it cannot complete my volume on *Modern English Writers*. It is too special; it did not shock you because you yourself are very special; the public will never consent to read theories, definitions, syllogisms, etc. : : : I have even been obliged, in order not to rebuff my readers, to make it into a dialogue of which Oxford is the scene; Even with that, the natural dryness of the subject is invincible; I must look out for something else; I have thought of a moralist—Dr. Arnold, the founder of Rugby; a moralist would make a suitable finish to studies on England.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Taine gave up the idea of this study.



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This has led me to ponder over my *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise* ; I hesitate to write it ; it will be too long, and it will mean passing judgments on insufficiently great personalities. Only great men have general ideas which, *à propos* of little men and secondary works, can only be repeated. Perhaps I may just write a succession of articles on great men and great works, a series of specimens instead of a detailed table. Give me your opinion ; I am in a state of uncertainty, which I always dislike . : :

You know my manner of living : I go into society as seldom as I can. I am progressing slowly with Tennyson, to whom I shall devote three articles. My ideas on the Philosophy of History have got hold of me again and are making my head ache ; they are my one vice, a vice which has already caused me much pain and much pleasure.

The articles on the Mormons will, I hope, come out this week ; there is rather a plethora of contributions at the *Débats* just now.

I have just read your article on German theatres ; it is interesting, lucid and novel ; you should write some more. Nevertheless, my opinion is that you did not profit by all your advantages. The fundamental rule in Literature, as in tactics, is to charge in masses ; you might have sneered much more at the diamond story and at the vulgar tragedy you mention ; you had enough material there for four pages of caricature, in twenty different aspects. See Macaulay—all his strength lies there. Again, *à propos* of sentimentality and somnambulism ; you do not develop enough ; you leave the reader to do so ; you do not impose yourself upon him ; you seem to think that two words will suffice to convince him ! You should press him, besiege him, overwhelm

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him with an excess of proofs and sensations. Your article is interesting to me and to other literary men, rather than to your neighbours the Mayor and the Justice of the Peace;

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Orsay, February 8, 1861:*

DEAR ED.,—I have not written to you for a long time, and you should have told me how you are; I am very anxious to know. I have been toiling vigorously since you left, and I have just finished a fiendishly long chapter on English poetry in the nineteenth century. These general treatises are very fatiguing; I was so tired that I have left Paris for two or three days. Social duties are a trouble too; it is extremely difficult to refuse certain invitations to dinner, after which I have to call. Late hours and excitement always put my wretched nervous machinery out of gear, and I am obliged to put the brake on as I am doing now.

I had begun writing out my recollections of Belgium and Holland; I read a few old books in order to understand the ancient customs of the country—but I have not got beyond the first eight pages. I have written twenty pages of a novel; God knows if it will ever be finished. I have been scribbling notes on the people I meet in society : : : that is all. I have not come across any interesting ideas, but I have enjoyed reading Firdusi's *Livre des rois*, Mme. d'Aulnoy's *Voyage en Espagne* (seventeenth century), and Shelley. This Englishman, who is unknown in France and moderately praised in his own country, is a rare poet, of the very first order. He is somewhat poor when dealing with men and characters, but when he speaks of ideal and

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natural things, of the clouds and the sky, he is worth the most ethereal of your Germans.

Such is my life, my dear friend. You see that it is the same as our old life at the École ; digging in a hole, always in the same spot, and obstinately persisting in making that hole. I do not think I shall be successful this year, in spite of all my efforts ; I am still a serf ; I want to be free. There is still Lord Byron to write about. It will be a big, isolated article, like those I wrote on Swift, Milton, etc. : . . . After that I shall have to re-write the first five chapters—two-thirds of the volume.

Of news, I have none. Assollant, whom I saw yesterday, is writing novels, and is going to attempt a second lecture on *Courier* to-day in the Rue de la Paix ; his first lecture, six months ago, was a failure ; he gets sixty francs (£2 8s.) for these lectures. Challemel Lacour is going to Pau ; life is cheaper there than in Paris. He may hold some classes in the winter for sick visitors and at the same time work for publishers. Renan has returned from the East as cross as an owl ; Berthelot is worn out. I hardly ever see Prévost now. Boissier has started his course of lectures at the Collège de France with a very well prepared lesson ; he will have an audience of about sixty people. The most notorious man just at present is About ; he has retired to Saverne and produced another novel ; he is looked upon as a new Macchiavelli ; he really is most imprudent. Sainte Beuve's *Lundis* are the best thing this year. Really in these days our youngest writers are the oldest, Sainte Beuve, Michelet, George Sand, etc. : : :

You may think that there is some intellectual pabulum in all this ; it is quite a mistake ; conversation consists in gossip

and the discussion of threadbare subjects. I have been amusing myself this year by making observations in view of a future novel, going to receptions as I would to the dissecting-theatre. Every cultivated and intelligent man should, in my opinion, be able to write one or two good novels, for what is a novel but an accumulation of personal experiences? Look at English men and women; their country swarms with novels and books of travel; most of them quite passable ones; the writing of such books forms a part of education, like the capacity for writing a magazine article or making a speech.

Why do you not also try your hand at it, you who have plenty of leisure? A book is always good when it contains real facts, from personal observation, and every one possesses such facts, for each of us lives in a certain special world, unknown to others.

And what about Cowper? Did you take it away with you? Did you read it? What do you think of it? Do you like it? You are a dog, a goose, a turkey, a Rector or a jelly-fish if you do not write an article on Cowper.

It is raining, and I am looking out of the window; not a soul passes, only a van now and then. We live a very cloistered life here; local society is quite intolerable—retired grocers who think a great deal of themselves. Now and then the polished envelope bursts open and the mean tradesman appears. The most interesting personage is a cat of your acquaintance, bearing the name of Zizi, who is as pompous and dignified as a high-class footman.

Good-bye, dear old Ed., and cheer up. At the end of this year, you will have your Faculty appointment, all the ladies will be in love with you, you will marry the Mayor's

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daughter, you will ask me to your wedding, and we will philosophize together to our hearts' content : : :

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Orsay, July 20, 1861.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—We have not written to each other for three months ! My accursed headaches are my excuse ; they are hardly less frequent than they were. I have spent weeks doing nothing, and even now I am scarcely able to work three hours a day ; so that it is an effort to write, even to the best of friends.

But you have no excuse, since your head is all right and you have nothing to do at Angers. How are you ? : : : I saw an article of yours in the *Revue*, but that was your only sign of life. Do write me news of your doings.

For the last four months, I have been plunged up to my neck in the English eighteenth century. Reading takes some time, but this has to be digested. It will make two articles for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and I have written about fifty pages, so you see I am not making much progress. The life of a writer is most wearisome, and brings very little profit ; it brings one a great many calls and letters from more or less well dressed people, who come to beg for an article or a recommendation, and that is a sort of profit which I would gladly do without.

I have been at Orsay for six weeks ; I do a little botany, but I should do better under your guidance ; likewise for German—I am toiling through some Goethe.

Prévost is still neurotic. Did you notice that he was away from the *Débats* for a month ? His disease had

attacked him again. He has got rid of it now. Fortunately he dines out every night ; he is successful in his family, his politics, his money matters and his pleasures. I do not believe that the life he leads is a wholesome one, but he knows it, and it is of no use to speak to him. M. Havet has been very ill and M. de Sacy has had a bilious fever ; our work kills us. How I do wish you were in a nice Faculty, peaceful and quiet ; how are your prospects in that direction ?

I have had no interesting ideas lately ; I wrote in my *Stuart Mill* that which had struck me most this year, which is that nothing exists but Phenomena, and that Matter is but a system of attraction and repulsion ordered relatively to geometrical forms, etc. . . .

My health does not allow me to meditate at length on my theory of Laws in History ; it is still in a crude, undigested state ; I ought to have you with me, as at the École, when we used to talk freely and unreservedly over things, looking at each from every aspect. That time of fermentation and production is past, the bloom of freshly acquired intuition has faded, and now we are patiently and humbly toiling, each in the path he has traced out for himself.

The only great discovery I have heard of is that of M. Kirchhoff concerning the lines in the solar spectrum—the designation of each simple body by a system of special lines—and the composition of the solar atmosphere. Light is being deeply studied just now ; Fizeau's experiments prove that it travels more quickly through water than through air, and those of Becquerel, junior, prove that all bodies are phosphorescent. You should also see the reports of the Biological Society on Reviviscence ; the plain con-

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clusion of which is that Life is but Organization in Action.

*To Cornélis de Witt.*

(Written on his return from a stay at the Val-Richer,  
M. Guizot's country place.)

*Orsay, September 20, 1861.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Thank you for the letters you forwarded to me. One was from M. Duruy. It appears that the vacancy at St. Cyr is not yet certain. He is pushing energetically at the wheel, and General Blondel is doing the same. The question will soon be settled; I am sure M. Guizot's letter will have great weight.

I am very grateful to you, my dear friends, for your cordial welcome; I also owe it to you that I have learnt what true home life means. I had been under many roofs, but never before had I seen such family harmony and quiet good sense; and the best of it all is that I believe no misfortune would be capable of disorganizing or even troubling your union.

Will you remind Guillaumie of his promise for October? I shall probably stay here until the 15th or 20th; if he can be here in the afternoon, I will show him a very delicate and graceful bit of landscape.

I went to the *Revue de l'Instruction*; they had received your *Jefferson*. I looked at the list of their contributors, and suggested that M. Dreyss—a clever and thoughtful man—should write a review of it.

There may be some difficulties over my articles at the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; M. de Mars opened his eyes when I told him that my request was a *sine quâ non*. He will

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refer to the great Chief, who now remains enthroned in his place in Savoy, and only returns to Paris the day before each number appears.

My respects to the ladies and to M. Guizot, and a cordia handshake to you and your brothers.

*To Cornélis de Witt.*

*Paris, October 18, 1861.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—M. Rouland granted me an audience, and was extremely kind. He began by repeating the objections contained in his answer to M. Guizot. As I saw that he looked upon the new course of lectures as on a college course, I undeceived him, explaining to him that it was analogous to the École Polytechnique classes, intended to stimulate and open the minds of the hearers, etc., etc. . . . Thereupon he completely changed his tone, and declared that he no longer opposed my candidature—that he welcomed it, even, that he was glad to see me return to teaching, and that, perhaps, later on, something might come in my way for the École Normale or elsewhere ; so that I look upon my appointment as almost certain.

The only remaining objection is the very wide range of subjects, and I am inclined to agree with that.

I do not think I need again appeal to the goodwill of M. Guizot, and I can only thank him ; his kindness equals his welcome.

M. Rouland's professions of faith and the tone of his conversation seemed to me much more liberal and better disposed towards me than the tone of his letter. All traces of blame had disappeared ; he merely expressed a personal



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difference of views, and approved of the free and even bold investigations of the scientific spirit.

I have seen Guillaume here ; he quite agrees with Casaubon.

*To Cornélis de Witt.*

*Paris, October 31, 1861.*

MY DEAR CORNÉLIS,—My St. Cyr appointment has fallen through at the last moment. The Marshal has maintained the present incumbent in his functions. The Director of the School, the Inspector, and the Academy Inspector made an attempt in my favour with no result. M. B. had a brother killed in the Crimea, which tells in his favour ; and also it is more difficult for the War Office than for the University to dismiss an official ; so that he will stay on, feeble as he is. There is nothing more to do in that direction.

I am working at the eighteenth century poets, Pope and Burns. I remember that you wanted a French subject about the Revolution ; why not study Fox ? He was not hostile to us, and he was most eloquent. A very interesting work would be *The Attitude of England towards France during the French Revolution*.

What is that book of M. Guizot's that I have seen announced ? "*Trois rois, trois peuples, trois siècles ?*" His last work seemed to me exalted in its ideas and very fine in style ; on certain points which you will guess, it left me unconvinced.

When you come back to Paris, will you bring me the first and second volumes of the *Pictorial History* ?

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To Édouard de Suckau.<sup>1</sup>

Paris, December 3, 1861.

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—If you are willing and able to take some trouble concerning the Faculty which has been promised you ; I advise you to ask for Caen rather than Grenoble. The Guizots have friends and relations there. It is a liberal and intellectual town, and I am sure you will like it better. Weiss, who knows a good deal, does not seem certain that you will obtain a post in a Faculty this year, I am very sorry to say ; he thinks that M. Rouland will wish to wait till next year, when the Angers affair is forgotten, and that his kind words do not mean much, coming from such a timid, hesitating sort of man. Weiss thinks the thing would have been carried through by force if Sarcey had had his way. It seems that Sarcey, About and Assollant intend writing violent diatribes against Public Education, each in his own paper.

How many classes a week do you have ? I can well understand your disgust ; in order to take any pleasure in teaching, one must have teachable material to work on ! But is there not, at least, one of your students who enjoys reading and discussion ?

Would you care to translate Stuart Mill's *Logic*, on which I wrote an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* ? Guillemin, the publisher, wished at that time to have it translated. Shall I go and see whether he has found a translator, and introduce you ?

My *English Eighteenth Century* is coming out in two *Revue* articles and four *Débats* papers. The first article

<sup>1</sup> M. de Suckau had been sent to the Lycée at Nantes, in disgrace.

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in the *Revue* appeared yesterday, after a long struggle with Buloz.

I am studying the nineteenth century, reading the poets ; there are too many of them, wretches who write fifteen volumes each, one good one for a hundred that are worthless. It is enough to turn one from writing, I have given up several years of my life to this work—what will be left of it fifty years hence ? Do you know Smollett's *History of England* ? Unless one has genius and luck, a book, however carefully written, soon becomes fit for the waste-paper basket. Perhaps we have made a mistake ; true happiness in life might have been to earn some money, to have a little house in the country, a tolerably sweet and sensible wife, and to warm our feet by our own hearth, paternally and conjugally, in a comfortable dressing-gown.

My head is the same as usual ; a secretary reads to me ; I walk about on the quays, and go to bed at nine o'clock. I am trying to find the formulæ for my *Nineteenth Century* ; for a comparison, I have been reading Ottfried Müller's *History of Greek Literature* and M. de Sacy's *Histoire des Druses*, with the result that I hold more than ever the opinion which I expressed to you ; that, independently of special and modelling circumstances, the Greeks, the Arabs, mediæval writers and modern thinkers have undergone a succession of intellectual periods which always recur in the same order. Each element follows its predecessor by virtue of the existence of this predecessor, as the flower is followed by the fruit and the fruit by the seed. Our nineteenth century, Pantheistic, scientific, critical and historical as it is, corresponds with Alexandria ; our seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which were oratorical and classical,

correspond with the times of Augustus and Euripides. The character of classical centuries consists in the clear and regular classification of ideas, with their subordination, order and development neatly ticketed. After this has been done, new arrivals and coming minds have an uneasy feeling that there is more to do; they seek and find breadth of views by acquainting themselves with past or neighbouring civilizations, and they discover comprehensive ideas and mystical or Pantheistic universals, vast enough to explain and reunite all that had been divided by classification. Thence arise a distinct sort of poetry and imagination, new passions and a novel fashion of understanding religion, society, and everything else.

I am talking to you as I used to do at the École, but you asked me to do so. Boissier has Havet's place at the Collège de France. As for me, it is very doubtful that I shall ever attain to any official post. Meanwhile, I am taking notes: I have been to some churches, to the Palais de Justice, and am now going to the Casino de Paris; perhaps the society I shall meet there is the glory of contemporary France. I must become acquainted with it!! But I am afraid of those notes of mine; they are neither patriotic, amusing, nor respectful.

About and Sarcey have taken the house of Alexandre Dumas (fils), Sarcey pays one-third of the rent and About pays two-thirds and provides the furniture. He now makes twelve thousand francs (£480) at the *Constitutionnel*. Renan has a post at the Collège de France. Assollant has brought out a charming novel, *Marcomir*; it is most wild and fantastic. Weiss is earning about twelve thousand francs and saving on it. Sarcey, with his *Feuilleton*, is

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quite in his element, and is publishing a volume of *Mots et Idées*, which is appearing by instalments in the *Illustration*. Prévost wears the most dazzling white waistcoats and is becoming quite official ; he and I have lost every point of contact.

Dear Ed., take plenty of tar and cod-liver oil, and look after your health ; it is the very Essence of the Substance. Would you like a letter for M. Schmidt, your inspector ? he is my brother-in-law's brother-in-law, and said to be a clever man.

I will mention your letter to M. Bertrand.

### *Notes on Paris.*

#### *An Evening Reception at M. Mohl's.*

*December 1861.*

A conversation with M. Mignet, whom I had never met before.

There is in him a certain barrenness ; he has evidently not lived among general ideas, he is not ready for them. Neither is he an artist ; see his *History of Mary Stuart*, his *French Revolution*—it is icy-cold. He is capable of assimilating indigestible material, of setting out a clear exposition arranged in beautiful order. He has the French talent of perfect classification and aristocratic academical elegance,

It is well known that he has been working for twenty years on a *History of the Reformation*. I asked him why, though at peace and practically free, Germany produced nothing between 1520 and 1620, after Reuchlin, Ulrich v. Hutten, Luther and Albert Dürer—whilst there was so much intellectual progress going on in France, in England, in

Spain and in Holland. This truth seemed to astonish him ; he acknowledged it, but could give me no explanation, not even such commonplace explanation as would come to the lips of M. Duruy, or of Challemel Lacour. Likewise, I asked him if the deep, universal cause of the Reformation was not the uneasy conscientiousness which is specially marked in Germanic races ? Again he seemed out of his depth—answered in the affirmative for Luther, and in the negative for Zwingli ; [he was right, for there the scientific and intellectual impulse of the Renaissance was a joint cause.] But it is clear that psychological history, like philosophical history, is a closed book to him.

He gets up at five every morning in order to work. He spends half an hour every evening with M. Thiers, who is his great friend. He goes out very seldom ; one lady is said to have begged him for two years to dine at her house. M. Mohl says that he was made for domestic life and ought to have been married. He has been very handsome and still has a very fine regular countenance ; though over sixty he looks fifty at the most. He is rather stiff and measured—there is not enough devil about him.

The contrast of types at this reception was very curious. By the side of M. Mignet was M. de Loménie with his military mustachios and merry laughter and anecdotes ; then a little, self-satisfied barrister, who had determined to lead the conversation, and succeeded in doing so ; finally, M. Mohl, an honest and profoundly learned German, who is, moreover, capable of generalization and with whom I talked of his Eastern countries and of Persia in particular. His idea is that civilization has constantly been destroyed by natural causes (hail-storms, etc.) in Persia, and that the

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Arabs never got beyond a sort of Middle Ages; that Indian documents are not sufficiently unaltered and authentic; and that it is only in the Greek, Roman and modern worlds that I shall find clear notions respecting the Laws of Civilization. He is dull, morose and sad in appearance, heavy in mind and body, lacking in refinement and flexibility, unwilling to talk, but ready to knock you down with well founded arguments. An American, Mr. Brook, an active and energetic greyhound, about fifty, with some of that gentle modesty which is sometimes to be found among Englishmen and which contrasts with our vivacious petulance. : : : Mrs. Mohl, an Irishwoman, who has lived in France, the type of an old eighteenth-century *marquise*, celebrated for eccentricity in dress, but kind and good-humoured, with childlike impulses, likes and dislikes. She seems to shock no one here, she certainly does not shock me. At Oxford, Mrs. W—— thought her impossible, and when I said to her, “Mrs. Mohl does not look to me like an Englishwoman,” she answered, “Thank you !”

January 10, 1862.

### *A Lunch with Pierre Leroux.*

He wished to make my acquaintance in order to talk to me about his last great work. He read some of it to us at dessert.

A big man, with a herculean torso and a mass of unkempt hair ; a good and loyal creature, but entirely devoid of tact and refinement. He runs to the right and to the left of the ideas which are presented to him, goes off at a tangent, etc. He passes judgment on everything, and presumes to dispute with scientists, though he knows very little about

science. "The hypothesis of a central liquid mass is absurd." We answered that under the pressure of a million atmospheres, the state of a body, in whatever degree of heat, cannot be guessed at, for lack of anything analogous from which to draw conclusions. "The precious metals of that liquid paste should ooze out on the surface of the earth, pushed through by centrifugal force!" We told him that the force of attraction at this spot was far greater than the centrifugal force. "Renan does not understand a word of the Book of Job; he has translated it all wrong." We compelled him to own that he has been doing a little Hebrew in amateur fashion for the last two or three years, that he has not read a single German commentator, that he has not gone beyond Richard Simon, of the seventeenth century, etc., etc.

In short, a hollow brain, who throws his "*Sensation—Sentiment—Consciousness*" at our heads, and bores us with his Preface. This Preface consists in a conversation between himself and a dead Protestant lady who had sent him the Bible. Together, in a dream, they comment on the Book of Job; this book has a philosophical sense beyond the real sense. The three friends of Job are symbols of Sensation, Sentiment and Consciousness, etc.

An absolute ignorance of critical prudence and the methods of criticism. Some imagination, but of a second-rate order.

He lives on the subscriptions of some friends, who each give him two francs a month. He has four children, whom he does not educate, on principle: "Man is not born to enjoy, but to struggle." He has written twenty-five volumes, which publishers refuse to reprint; he has been



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a dupe all his life ; he sold his *Translation of Werther* to Charpentier for 300 francs, and Charpentier made 15,000 francs out of it ! He must have his book printed by a Protestant publisher, and then it will sell in America, in Prussia, in Australia. It will be bought by Unitarians, Mormons and other mystics !

He has been a common labourer ; he went to England with 150 francs in his pocket, to found a newspaper. He has been a carbonaro : : : He has no practical sense ; but plenty of courage, energy and physical strength. He will never succeed, but he will last a long time.

February 22, 1862.

### *Opening of Renan's Lectures at the Collège de France:*

The Liberal students went to ask M. Despois whether they should hiss ; the Catholics went to M. de Laprade on the same errand :

There was a group who hissed, but those who applauded were in a crushing majority. When the audience poured in, the crowd at the door was so violent that they tore down a lamp, and the police had to clear the yard by force ; I saw one man covered with blood.

For three-quarters of an hour there was a storm of vociferations, savage howls and laughter. " Long live Quinet ; Michelet, Prévost-Paradol, Laprade ! long live Guérault ! down with Guérault ! down with the Jesuits ! "

Renan entered amidst a thunder of cheers, howls and waving of hats. A few hisses were immediately covered by another round of applause ; for twenty minutes he could not say a word, but attempted by useless gestures to obtain silence. His gestures are somewhat episcopal (a

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bishop *in partibus infidelium*), and so are certain phrases of his lecture. It is published in the *Débats* to-day. He is too unctuous.

His lecture (on what general civilization owed to the Semites) is extremely good ; there are some bold passages concerning Christianity and the Pope. The students applauded coarsely, like readers of the *Siècle*. After the class, an enormous column of them, under their umbrellas, went to the Rue Madame, to cheer him again.

March 3, 1862.

*A Conversation with Charles Robin, the Positivist Anatomical Microscopist.*

Forty-one years old, spectacles, a moustache and an imperial ; only half-polished, a regular *savant*, absorbed in his dissections, ever returning to his one idea, even at the wrong time, or before ladies ; on the whole somewhat ignorant of Society, refinement and delicacy. " Yes, brains are indeed admirable things ; I was handling some only this morning," etc., etc.

He is so much absorbed by Science that it has kept him from marrying ; in fact, he is rather a fanatic ; he blames X——, who goes out too much and no longer works.

He has two ideas, which are as follows :—Firstly, he has traced out the whole nervous machinery (by means of a microscope) from the external surface tissue to the medulla, and followed out the medulla across the *Pons Varolii* into the hemispheres of the brain. The white substance perceives impressions and the grey substance is the focus of elaboration and of voluntary and muscular reaction. Secondly, the great principle is the constant renewal of the whole substance of

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the body. It causes the new substance, as it arrives, to flow as into a mould in the form of a gesture, an action, a state, whether intentional or not, accidental or not, which is present, and which is repeated. Hence the acquisition of instincts and transmissible habits ; hence the different races, etc. . . .

It was impossible to make him—or Verneuil either—understand that there is a difficulty in the equation which they establish between a sensation, such as sorrow or happiness and a trepidation, a contraction or any sort of extended movement:

### *A Visit from Gustave Flaubert.*

A tall, vigorous man, with square shoulders, a thick moustache and a heavy appearance, not unlike a somewhat worn Cavalry officer, who has become addicted to tipping.

Ponderous strength is the main feature of his conversation, tone and gestures. There is nothing refined about him, but a great frankness and naturalness ; he is a primitive man, a “dreamer” and a “savage” ; these two last words are his own. He is an obstinate toiler, who strains his imagination and has to suffer the consequences.

He seldom goes out in the evening, and works a great deal at night, in a large, well warmed, lonely room, very noisily, “howling, perspiring and drinking water,” he says. When inspiration comes, he hardly eats or sleeps at all, but wakes up in the night to write. “My whole body is not too much to write with !” When, on the contrary, you see him walk, eat, drink and sleep well, it means that inspiration has deserted him.

After times<sup>\*</sup> of excitement come times of depression ; he

remains inert, lying on a sofa "like a brute" horribly miserable. In his youth he was given to "the spleen"; he used to mark on a calendar the day when he should blow his brains out, and, when the day came, he would postpone his suicide for a few months. "And I am still on my pins, you see." This gives an idea of his manner; it is like Théophile Gautier's, but coarser and cruder.

He worked for thirty-six hours consecutively at the beginning of his *Défilé de la Hache*, and his eyes did not even ache; he must have the physique of a bull.

He sees too many things when his eyes are shut; his brain is like a photograph, on which each crack in the floor is as clearly reproduced as the general outlines of the room. That is why, when he begins to write, he suffers from the accumulation of details and does not know where to begin; he writes too much, and is obliged to prune down afterwards and to make four pages out of fifty.

His imagination is capricious; he may see in the street the bill of some concert and be prevented from doing any work the whole of that day, by that poster "running in his head."

He is very artistic, and keenly appreciates beautiful effects. He criticises in *Salammbô* a want of crescendo; as in the two visits of Harnon and Giscon to the mercenaries; and occasional wants of proportion—*Salammbô* is too small for her pedestal.

He has a keen feeling for Nature and the open air. "It does not rest me, it devours me"; indeed, it absorbs him. At the sea-side, he remains for hours lying on the sand, like an animal, without an idea, rousing himself now and then sufficiently to bathe.

He is not "filthy," as he is said to be, and it vexed him

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that *Madame Bovary* should be read on account of the indecencies in it. He is an artist, a physiologist before everything, and he seeks truth, reality, human nature, such as it is, trying to obtain great dramatic or picturesque effects from it. "I love every excess," he told me, "not if it is prolonged, for then it would no longer be an excess. But an excess, whatever it is, attracts me." Hence his partiality to Lord Byron; he loves strength, unbounded, reckless strength.

His method consists in obstinate study; he gave up six years to *Salammbô*, five to *Madame Bovary*; he accumulates notes and corrects his manuscript again and again. He travelled in the East; at Constantinople, he used to watch dancing dervishes day after day. One of them had an admirably ecstatic countenance. He made his acquaintance, invited him to have some coffee, and gave him some brandy, of which the man drank abundantly: questioned as to his feelings, the thoughts that come to him as he gyrates, he answered that he had no thoughts at all, no dreams, save of the brandy he would drink afterwards. Flaubert adds that it is so in the East and that faces and costumes are often magnificent whilst the head is perfectly empty. That is why he made of *Salammbô* a mere statue, with incipient hysteria. According to him, women in classical Antiquity had but an *outside* and no *inside*.

Never to start from a generality like Hugo and Schiller, and then to individualize it; but from a particularity, and then to generalize it, like Goethe and Shakespeare; such is his maxim.

He is not married; he found he could not afford it; he lives with his mother and a niece, sometimes spends

months alone in the country, travels a great deal, and does not trouble about money. *Madame Bovary*, after all expenses were paid, left him with a debt of 300 francs.

I admire him, especially because he is sincere and unsophisticated. He is no Parisian; he even looks rustic, like a peasant brought up in painters' studios—not a Society man. He says he hates putting on evening dress.

I took upon myself to tell him (with some precautions) that his style will not last, that his descriptions will be unintelligible in a hundred years' time, that it is so already for three-quarters of the public, and that action and narration, as in *Gil Blas* and Fielding, are the only durable systems.

He answered that it is impossible to write otherwise nowadays; that, moreover, there is no act without picturesqueness, and that the idea must reach the surface, and manifest itself in a corporeal and visible form.

But the fact remains that it is degenerate Literature, dragged forcibly from its domain into the realms of Science and the painter's Art. Many little things prove that it is so; he has worn out his intelligence, squeezed it like a lemon, and it has made him as nervous as a woman—he so strong and muscular. He starts at the sound of a cork being cut, of a plate being scratched, etc.

He admires *Apuleius* as a masterpiece, because of its colour, realism and sensuous boldness. It is a proof of their affinity; both are decadent.

He is about to write a novel on Paris (*l'Éducation Sentimentale*), having written one on the Provinces. But he must first of all impress his imagination with the whole of modern Paris. He is going to buy maps of Paris, etc.

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—again having recourse to material means of proceeding to topography.

### *A Visit to Gustave Flaubert.*

On the third floor, Boulevard du Temple, a south aspect and a good view : Fieschi's old house. A flat entirely carpeted, with red leather divans and arm-chairs, medallions, carved wood cupboards, an Indian god on the mantel-piece.

I was even more struck by the brutal energy of his face and of his heavy bovine eyes. He wore a very loose morning coat, his shirt-collar turned down and unbuttoned, showing his hairy chest.

His face is flushed, his hair almost gone, showing excess of work and a constrained imagination. He had been working from two o'clock this morning, until four this afternoon, at a reply to the *Revue Européenne*, which had reproached him with not knowing enough archæology. He generally works at night, and very noisily ; he shouted and screamed so much last night, without knowing it, that his niece, in the room below, was unable to sleep.

In the country, near Rouen, he often spends three winter months without seeing any one, rising at noon and going to bed at three or four o'clock in the morning. On Sundays, he dines with his brother and spends a few hours with him.

He is a very good fellow, natural and free from conceit ; he takes criticism very well and pays no compliments. I continue to think that the state of his mind, the vision of physical detail, is not transmissible by writing. but only by painting ; he answers that such is the state of his mind and of all modern minds.

## 1860-1863

He has some odd expressions, and uses a good deal of art-student's slang, speaking of "Mother Sand," "Father Guizot," etc.

The powerful, constrained and morbid state of his imagination is very striking; he cannot write his book on Paris because he has not yet found names for his characters. Renan's book on his sister seems to him vague and abstract; he wants to know more about her face, her figure, her clothes. "But we are told nothing; it is mere generalization; it should be called *A Moral Portrait of Mlle. Renan*." He calls *Candide* "delicate and refined." He worships La Bruyère and Montesquieu, and would give every word he ever wrote to have been the author of *L'Amateur de Fleurs*. Châteaubriand, with his "heart-storms," appeals to his temperament, but he recognizes that it is bad taste on his part, like some people's taste for "high" game. He had imagined Homais pitted with traces of smallpox, and was quite surprised to hear that it was not so in the book.

Everything seems to him vague and unfinished which has not a well defined physical form seen with a visionary's eyes.

He writes in a most extraordinary fashion, starting with incomplete phrases, words here and there, waiting for the theme to come, rubbing out and re-writing again and again—an immense and almost insane labour.

January, 1863.

### Artists.

M. Delacroix (at M. Benoît Champy's).

M. Berlioz (at M. Bertin's).



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M. Delacroix is sixty-four, but his hair is still quite black. He is gentle, moderate and refined ; eminently tactful and accustomed to good society. He pretends to be very classical and reasonable ; perhaps he is so, having discovered too late that he does not know the positive and mechanical part of his art.

He praises Latin and classical education through classical models, declares there are no masterpieces to be found but in classical Antiquity as well in Letters as in Art, and that they should be studied from the beginning. If he took his subjects out of Shakespeare, it was because Racine did not provide him with any action.

He blames his biographer, Silvestre, accuses him of intruding on his privacy, and calls him a man devoid of taste.

He counsels incessant work, constant correcting, especially of paintings. " It is only after a hundred studies that one discovers the True and the Simple. I suppose that a writer of twenty years' standing has an ever ready form, and knows how to express everything ; but a painter has to study anew for every pose, every subject."

He asks me why Shakespeare is so full of shocking inequalities, and praises by contrast Molière's order, regularity and perfection.

Nothing could be less like his conversation than the passionate outbursts attributed to him by Silvestre.

Berlioz, on the other hand, was quite consistent ; to begin with, he has published in the *Débats* an admirable *feuilleton* entirely made up of personal confidences, which I shall pin to this. He owned that they were confidences. It is a fact that his ~~first~~ concert in Russia brought him in 20,000fr. (£800), 7,000fr. of which covered the expenses.

He had to leave France suddenly on account of his debts.

Here are some of his sayings : " Music is a youth of twenty, with an immense future before him ; other arts are old and worn out."

" Music nowadays is above nationalities, above time, and beyond any influence. A composer grows spontaneously, like a fungus ; do not compare music with other arts, which are national plants. Ordinary laws have no effect on it."

" I detest, I despise Rossini, and I am glad that I do. His talent is merely sensuous ; he has no soul. Music has no other object than to render a passionate and unhappy soul visible."

" At the court of Hanover, after the adagio in *Romeo and Juliet*, I felt something tugging at my coat-tails ; I turned round, and saw two musicians, who were kissing them, and saying, ' Homage ! homage ! ' Somehow it did not seem contemptible in Germany."

" Adam's music is fit for cooks, Auber's for *grisettes* . . . "

" In London, when I was conducting the Drury Lane orchestra, a singer introduced a lot of ornaments into *Voi che sapete*. I stopped short. ' Mademoiselle, did your singing-master make all those pencil-marks on your score ? ' ' Yes, sir. ' ' Well, tell him, with my compliments, that he is a fool. You will please sing the air as it is written, or we will not accompany you. ' "

A great idea within a man is like the iron spike that sculptors put in their statues ; it impales and supports him. See Renan, Berthelot, Robin, Woepke, and especially Berlioz ! He is constantly suffering, his nerves are on edge ; think of his two dreadful marriages, and of his son's story !

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His sorrows cause him horrible physical sufferings, during which he makes puns !!

But what a fine, passionate head it is !!

*A Dinner with Sainte Beuve, Gavarni, etc.—A Visit to the Brothers de Goncourt.*

The Goncourt brothers (forty and thirty-two years old), are twins in heart and in mind. They write the same books, and live in the same flat. The younger of the two is good-looking ; they are not brilliant, but a little heavy ; their style lacks clearness and spontaneity. They say some amusing things, having lived with artists a great deal.

They have an income of 10,500 fr. (£820). They spend the summer with their relations, economizing, boating, fencing, and eating. Their vice is the collecting-mania. They collect eighteenth century things—books, engravings, original drawings, precious MSS., etc. They have a volume of *La Fontaine's Fables*, illustrated by Eisen, which is worth 500fr. They value their collection at 100,000fr.—“the first after the Louvre.” In fact, they have some charming things, exquisite samples of Watteau, Boucher, Moreau, etc.

Nothing teaches one History better, it makes one feel as if one had been living in those days ; refinement, gaiety and enjoyment call forth everything else. Nothing is more delicious than those dresses, those pretty women's bedrooms, with large beds and embroidered hangings, gracefully shaped, gilt furniture, etc. : : : it is truly French and exquisitely suggestive of pleasure.

Gavarni is rather eccentric. He has taken up Higher

Mathematics, and insists on contradicting Newton. He has written a memoir "On Speed within Speed." His other passion is landscape-gardening; and, when he does any work, it is in order to pay his labourers. He takes no care of himself. He fainted one day on the Place du Havre; it was seven o'clock in the evening, and he had eaten nothing since the morning. One evening, the Goncourts found him sitting in one of his numerous little rooms, with neither food nor fire. "Why ever remain like this?" "Pooh! when one is cold and hungry, one is inclined to cerebral congestion, and ideas come more easily."

Sainte Beuve has every moral quality, even modesty. He says: "I am very ignorant, I have learnt nothing; I only seem up to date because I have met several specialists!"

He is a passionate admirer of Voltaire, and declares that there will be no such thing as civilization in France as long as Voltaire's statue is not erected in the Place de la Concorde.

He was saying of About, "He is foolish man; there are three historic cities: Athens, Paris, and Rome, and he has set them all three against him; he is in too great a hurry about everything."

He reproaches us with being dupes regarding Musset, Balzac and others. Musset, according to him, was full of affectations from the beginning; he only became natural when his strength began to fail and his talent to decline. Moreover, he was an ill-tempered man, brutal and disagreeable with Hugo; and he frequently indulged in wild freaks and the most eccentric debauchery. He said to me, "You take men at their own estimation, you judge

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of them by their writings—beware ! As for yourself, you should acquire more ease ; your matter is sound and your style will improve.”

Sainte Beuve agrees with Stendhal that “The part played by mere form is becoming smaller every day. Everybody will end by knowing how to write, writing pamphlets as easily as we now write letters, and, by that time, the only appreciable value will be that of the facts and ideas contained in a work.” He would like to eliminate Greek and Latin from ordinary education, reserving them for specialists and for a select few. Princess Mathilde declares that he is becoming a Socialist. He is against both literary and landed ownership.

He is naturally timid, but becomes bolder through conviction and reflection. Youth is coming to him now at fifty-five years of age. The first impression that he produces is that of timidity ; he speaks gently, in a low, insinuating voice ; some of his syllables are almost indistinct. He is not unlike a fat priest or a large, prudent-looking cat. He has a bald head, with a pale, irregular, somewhat Chinese face, small, mocking eyes, and a sugary smile ; altogether the aspect of a worldly ecclesiastic, suddenly transformed by lightning outbursts of frankness and firmness of belief.

### *Conversations with Renan and Berthelot.*

I have seen a good deal of Renan at Chalifer, and he also spent a whole evening with me.

He is, above everything, a passionate, nervous man, beset by his own ideas. He walked up and down my room as if he were in a cage, with the jerky tones and gestures of

Invention in full ebullition. There is a great difference between him and Berthelot, who is as quiet as a patient, labouring ox, chewing the cud of his idea and dwelling on it. It is the contrast between Inspiration and Meditation.

Neither of them has the analytical habits of Condillac and of Bertrand, the mathematician. The one ferments slowly and obscurely, the other explodes. Neither of them goes methodically forward, passing from the known to the Unknown.

Renan is perfectly incapable of precise formulæ; he does not go from one precise truth to another, but feels his way as he goes. He has *impressions*, a word which expresses the whole thing. Philosophy and generalizations are but the echo of things within him, ; he has no system, but only glimmerings and sensations.

In metaphysics, he is absolutely unstable, entirely lacking in proofs and analysis. Roughly speaking, he is a poetical Kant with no formula, exactly like Carlyle; I read him parts of the *Sartor Resartus*, which he thought admirable. He admits that he only perceives phenomena and their laws, that beyond lies an abyss, an X whence they derive, that we suspect something, very little, of it through the sublime sense of duty; we only know that in that Beyond there is Something sublime which corresponds to the sublimity of our sense of duty. In any case, that Something is not a Person; personality and individuality are only to be met with at the other end of physiology, at the extremity of phenomena and not at their beginning. Therefore there is no Personal God.

As to the soul, he does not believe in personal immortality; he only admits that of works. "My idea, the idea

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to which I have devoted my life, survives me. I myself survive it, in proportion to the love I have given it and the progress I have made with it."

Nevertheless he leaves a lacuna which only Faith and Symbols can fill, if only with simple allegories and pure presumptions; that is the nature of that supreme X, and of the correlation between a noble soul and that X.

"A Sceptic, who, where his scepticism makes a hole, stops up the hole with his mysticism." Berthelot laughed and called me a man of labels, when I told Renan that this was the definition for him.

For everything else, for psychological, historical and all other facts, he is a pure Positivist; he believes in natural laws only, and absolutely denies all supernatural intervention.

Of the three, I am the most truly Positivist and the least Mystical. I admit that causes are but abstracts or universals. Berthelot says that the typical cause is the effort of our Will, an irreducible notion. His originality consists in looking upon Force not only as a principle, but as a product. For instance, a living body, composed of elementary forces, is nevertheless in its total one individual force. Space and time exist but in regard to our mind. To sum up, there is but one, indivisible, perfect force, which appears to us divided and in particles, and which is God.

Renan is not a society man; he does not know how to talk with ladies, but only with specialists. He lacks the talent of intriguing, of seizing opportunities. He is, before everything else, a man of one idea, the priest of a God. He prides himself justly enough on this fact:

1860-1863

His process of writing consists in throwing down bits of sentences, paragraph headings, here and there ; when he has arrived at the sensation of the whole, he strings it all into one.

He read me a long piece of his *Life of Jesus*. He is writing delicately but arbitrarily ; his documents are too uncertain and not accurate enough. He puts together all the gentle and agreeable ideas of Jesus, apart from sad ones, makes of them a charming, mystical pastoral, which he dates from the stay at Nazareth. Then, in another chapter, he gathers every threat, every bitterness, and frames them within the journey to Jerusalem.

Berthelot and I vainly told him that this is putting a novel in the place of a legend ; that he spoils those parts which are certain by a mixture of hypotheses ; that the clerical party will triumph and pierce him in the weak spot, etc. He will hear nothing, see nothing, but his idea. He tells us that we are not artistic, that a simply positive and dogmatic treatise would have no life about it, that Jesus has lived and must be made to live again, that he does not care if people howl, etc., etc. He is neither cautious nor diplomatic.

Dear old Madame Renan is eighty years old, gentle and dignified ; she asked me for the history of my patron, Saint Hippolytus, and, smiling, raised her hands towards heaven at the thought of what her son has become after the pious education which she gave him.

To N.

April 30, 1862.

It is difficult to give an adequate answer to the questions



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you kindly ask me. The person in question uses the word *Truth* in a very wide and very vague sense ; I have read her letter over, and, if I am not mistaken, she does not require systematic knowledge so much as a source of consolation ; it is strength rather than science that she yearns for, and she only asks for demonstrations with the hope of finding Peace. I shall therefore answer her hidden question and not her open query ; she will forgive me if I make a mistake.

Everything depends on her present state ; I think, with all respect, that I understand it. She has lost her fatherland, and, with it, those sympathies which we find in people, ideas, feelings, customs, faces, and even houses and trees. She has also lost the greater part of her fortune, and, with it, that confidence and ease, those possibilities of action and of pleasure, which lighten so many burdens, loosen so many bonds, are so appropriate to delicate senses and habits of elegance, and, when suppressed, leave behind them so much daily discomfort and eternal constraint. She has even suffered from more intimate sorrows ; she is suffering from them still, and all these trials have fallen upon a most sensitive soul, sensitive by reason of her moral refinement, artistic culture, innate goodness, instinctive nobility and natural generosity. Many other circumstances have conspired to aggravate this morbid state. She has chosen for her principal occupation Music, of all arts the least rational, the most dreamy and emotional, and, amongst composers she has preferred the most tragic and the most fantastic. In literature, she has loved the writers who most resembled those musicians, and has fed her mind on reverie and sentiment. To crown all, she has avoided going out, from sheer

disgust at the dulness and coarseness of the people she met. Finally, her sex, her age, her birth, and her relations have prevented her from having an aim, a goal, a home, a profession, social or family interests; her eagerness of mind and her capacity for devotion have found no object; and the great natural forces which she possesses have fallen back upon herself and have gradually impaired her health.

You will see for yourself whether this is a faithful portrait. If it be so, it is obvious that fifty volumes of sound reasoning or exalted ideas will not pacify this soul, but merely divert it; you might as well prescribe the Opera for a *migraine*. Her complaint comes from the inaction of her higher faculties and from her incapacity of taking any interest in anything. She needs to be persuaded that some end is good and beautiful, and that she must reach it, work towards it every day, and let this work absorb her whole will and all her capabilities.

Her former sorrows have left her so sore and her present grief is so acute, because her whole attention is concentrated on feeling the one and remembering the others; the only remedy is to turn her mind and her thoughts in another direction.

Only one thing can do that, which is a system of work and action towards a noble object, that of acquiring the art of writing. Let her say to herself resolutely, every morning, "I *will* be a writer." Some of our neighbours, Miss Brontë, and Mrs. Gaskell have done so with great success, on modern ideas. She could do likewise, I am certain of it, and I affirm it *loyally*, without flattery or afterthought. Her delicate sensibility, so easily wounded and so original, her instinctive shrinking from anything vulgar, are the

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purest source of invention. Invention consists solely in receiving a spontaneous, sudden, personal and independent impression of every object and every event. She is capable of it as you know. But she does not yet know how to express her impressions, to resolve them into ideas, to decompose them into short accurate phrases, to classify them; she has to learn her profession, a beautiful profession, for it is founded on the observation of the laws of life and of human nature. It is a Philosophy in action; by studying it, she will discover those truths which she loves; in order to master it, she should read those philosophical books for which she asks. Everything comes back to it, everything is to be found in it; artists are the greatest of philosophers, for they know the facts better than philosophers do; they verify them oftener from closer observation; they are more practical and less obscure. I will dare to add another reason, which to another would seem like vanity, but which she will understand. We owe something to our nation, our time and our race, from a strict sense of probity; we have received a very great deal; there is not one true, humane or just idea which has not cost the men who acquired it for us a whole ransom of labour and trials. Everything that we esteem in our own thoughts and feelings comes from others, and it is only right that we should repay to those who will come after us a little of what we owe to the dead. That is why any one who thinks at all should work out his thoughts so as to make them public and useful; he who has learnt to understand human nature, to dramatize truths and to construct an ideal, owes to others this ideal and those truths; to create a few noble and refined characters is to teach psychology and to preach

ethics. Oliver Goldsmith did more with his *Vicar* than a hundred preachers with a hundred sermons. The level of intelligence and integrity is raised insensibly by the reading of these books and by the observations which they furnish or suggest. If I had to choose for some one between all the advantages of fortune, power, success, rest, and friendship, I would have none of them ; I would wish him to be an artist, a writer rather than a painter, a novelist rather than a writer, and I should consider that for him and for others I could choose nothing better or more beautiful.

Neither do I think that I could choose anything more consoling. The only thing which can take a mind away from itself and absorb it is a system. An isolated effort of the will may send trouble away for a moment, but only to return. Consolation only comes when we set to work involuntarily, because we feel an attraction to do so, and System alone produces this inclination. A plan of work, a systematic order of study and research grasps the mind like a system of wheels within wheels. To take an example, I say to myself, "I can now write descriptions, but not dialogues. How can I learn to write a dialogue? La Fontaine, Molière, Balzac, have done so with great success in this or that passage. I will analyze this passage, find out what process, what kind of emotion have made them especially successful in that particular instance. Having discovered this method, I will now apply it to other passages by the same author. I shall find out by comparison where I have failed, I shall understand this method more completely and more clearly ; I will practise it, and, in so many months, I shall have mastered it. The dialogue

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being now acquired, we will try narration. Then the subordination of the characters to each other and their special qualities, their relations to their country, education, temperament, etc. After a while, the system of ideas engendered in the mind is abundant enough and sufficiently strong to live by itself, without help from the will, involuntarily, whilst walking or dreaming, some idea occurs to one which completes or rectifies this system ; this is succeeded by another ; interest comes, some knowledge being required, the wish for it becomes imperative, all the more so that this knowledge is demanded by a number of anterior observations ; the whole acquired Being stands up and claims it. This Being, therefore, is what should be acquired, and will be acquired, if the Will is applied to it continually and systematically for a year, two years, perhaps three years. I am convinced that a man can make and even re-make himself ; it is a great power, and a noble use of an exalted mind and a generous heart. I consider him happy who owes his happiness to Nature, but I admire and love him who has created it for himself, who has planted it within him through sheer courage and force of will, who has not allowed discouragement and sorrow to fade or to uproot it, who has nurtured it, strengthened it and owes it entirely to himself and himself alone. Tell her of whom we are speaking that she is worthy to set this goal before her eyes and to lead this life, that it is not enough for her to stand up against outside accidents and in the regularity of a simple honest life ; that the greatest difficulty, the noblest work is to act on herself ; tell her that her many rare gifts, her quick and delicate intelligence, her acute feeling for everything that is great and generous, her liberal education,

her mind; so easily and naturally open to all the highest modern truths, deserve not to be used by her and against her in such a way as to destroy and consume her, but to be preserved carefully, like precious plants, to be cultivated and strengthened so as to bloom and to bear the fruit which they owe to others and of which they give the promise. Let her permit me to tell her that any private sorrow in her past life will find ample compensation in the general affection inspired by Beauty and Truth; that every personal affection, however well merited, ends by seeming narrow; that a complete mind can only be satisfied by broad views embracing the whole, and broad sympathies, making us participate in the life of the whole: Women usually only share and penetrate this through the intermediary of their fathers or their husbands; it is better to enter into it for oneself. At the end of so many apparently dry readings and reasonings, we experience the sensation of a great motion which carries us and all things along with it; the effort by which we contribute towards it is very small; but no matter, the important thing is to feel that we do contribute to it, and that we are included in it. The private soldier does not win the battle, but when the battle is won and he has done his share, he feels as much delight as if he had done it all alone.

Few things could give me more pleasure than to see her of whom we are speaking awaken to a taste for life and accept my advice. I feel towards her like a painter towards Leonardo's St. Anne; I should like to open the shutters and let in light and air, to prevent the damp from destroying her. Let me know her decision.

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*To Édouard de Suckau,*

*Orsay, June 15, 1862.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD, I have been very long in answering you ; the fact is that I have just returned from England, where I spent a fortnight, and I only found your letter on my return. I went off rather suddenly, to stay with some friends who had a house over there.

I am very glad that you did not resign, or ask for a long leave. The worst is over ; it would have been like closing a theatre on the eve of the first night after all the expenses had been incurred. From what you have told me, it seems to me certain that you will get a Faculty post in the autumn. It would have been beginning life over again and throwing ten years' toil overboard. You see, dear Ed., literary life here, the necessity of earning one's bread with a lot of black lines extracted from one's brains, is really too hard. One hardly makes anything, whilst in a Faculty you can repeat the same lectures.

I shall be at Orsay for another week. After that we shall go back to Paris. Shall I be able to work, I wonder ? I have not written a line for a month, my head ached too much, I had to put the brake on. That is *my* trouble ; you see I have one too, my dear fellow. I do not know when I can go back to my book, and unwilling idleness and empty reverie simply consume me.

I have tried to make some use of my enforced leisure, and brought another little note-book back from London. I went up the Thames, saw the Derby, attended public balls, visited slums, the docks and two country houses. At the British Museum I copied the manuscript of a mediæval

writer that we have not got here. All Paris was in London—M. Bertin, M. Say, Achard, Théophile Gautier, Marcelin, Guillaume Guizot, etc. : : .

Since you want books to read, try to get Mme. d'Aulnoy's *Voyage en Espagne* (about 1700), M. Thiébault's *Mémoires sur Frédéric le Grand et sa Cour*, and Le Play's *Ouvriers Européens*.

Your letter gives me pleasure for several reasons. I see you have a friend, some work and nice walks ; who is this M. Bertin ? he was not of our time.

I suppose you have not abandoned our dear Cowper ; sign it, and send it to Charpentier ; you must have some literary claims to push your candidature. Ask Prévost whether it is safe to publish anything at Charpentier's ? if it is not, you must try elsewhere. I think you might—without dishonour—have recourse to the *Revue Contemporaine*. A purely literary and psychological study does not bind you to anything.

Have you read a novel by Fromentin, the painter, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, entitled *Dominique* ? I have only glanced at it, but it seems good. How delightful it is to have two such gifts and in such a degree.

There are two curious articles on Renan by Sainte Beuve. Though they are good, they are not in his best vein, and they are redolent of pot-boiling. Moreover, they are not altogether sincere, and they are written with the too obvious intention of being agreeable to the Emperor and of preparing the re-opening of the class.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to write

<sup>1</sup> Renan's lectures at the Collège de France had been suspended by the higher authorities.



## LIFE AND LETTERS OF H. TAINÉ

true criticism and to spare people at the same time ; better be content with criticizing the dead.

After a visit to England, French newspapers always seem ridiculously inadequate ; my poor *Débats* even seems a nice little paper, passable from a literary point of view ; but, as regards politics, discussions, real facts and foreign news, it is very insignificant.

Marcelin is preparing his paper ; he was in London, taking notes. He intends to have a lot of articles showing the contrast between life in London and life in Paris, from every point of view. His is a very refined and original mind, with curious reactions. He wants to collect sketches, mental photographs, small but exact facts ; you might provide him with some, you have seen so much of provincial life ! You need only sign by a pseudonym. His idea is that facts are most interesting if stated in their nakedness, without comment.

Good-bye, dear, good Ed. Try to get well, I shall make every effort to give you a good example in that direction.

*To Edouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, July 24, 1862.*

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—I was obliged to take a month's rest on my return from England, as I told you I feared I should ; including the preceding month, I have wasted two whole months. At last, about July 10, we came back to Paris, and I am rather better ; I can work nearly the whole morning and I have gone back to my *Normans*, which will last me until the end of the month. After that I shall attack my *Sixteenth Century*. There are three long chapters which I want to re-model, round about Shakespeare and

Milton. I shall not have done in time for the winter, which spoils my plans for public lectures. Well, it cannot be helped.

Say whatever you like about M. X——. To tell you the truth, all those good people seem to me beneath contempt; there are not six persons in Paris with whom I should care to talk of Hegel and his *Logic*.

My ideas are formulated in the preface of the second edition of the *Philosophes Français*, which you have. I contend that the *Elements* of beings, the *Begriffe*, are *abstracts*, and as such included within the facts or things which we observe; that they can, by abstraction, be isolated from them, and that it is not a very extraordinary operation. This does not prevent me from believing, with Hegel, that simple, primary abstracts, indecomposable elements, such as *Sein*, *Nichts*, *Werden*, etc., may be considered *a priori*, then combined, until experimental laws and types are reached once more. We still have here the same elements, the *abstracts*, which, as abstracts, are included in the experiment like small elementary crystals within a large crystal. The large crystal can be made up again with the small ones, or the small ones may be extracted from the large one; but, in either case, when we hold one of the terms we have the other, and vice versa.

As to the word *insight*, I think I was commenting on an idea of Carlyle's which is that a man of genius possesses *insight*, the immediate perception of the essence of things, that is, of primary and generating abstracts, of what I have called the type, the master-faculty, etc.

You, who know my ideas so well, are aware that, on the whole, I am an idealist. Properly speaking, facts do not

## LIFE AND LETTERS OF H. TAINÉ

exist, they only seem to our mind to do so ; in reality nothing exists but abstracts, universals, general things which appear to us in the guise of particular things. It is Spinoza's own doctrine ; I have expressly written in my essay on Stuart Mill that we perceived things from the wrong aspect.

For the same reason, I have placed myself quite apart from Comte, who denies the possibility of metaphysics. I have also written in *Stuart Mill* that, of all philosophers, Hegel was the one who had drawn nearest to the truth. But spiritualists always insist on a reason, a sublime intuition apart from all the faculties, and they see in things a Substance or a Force entirely separate and distinct from the facts—which is fallacious.

The *Revue Germanique* had a good article on Schopenhauer : developing the idea of the Force of which the Will is the type ; Maine de Biran arranged *à la Fichte*. It is easier to analyze Force and to show that it is not a Being, but an abbreviated phrase, and that nothing *is* but relations between abstracts.

Before you finally throw over the University, remember that when you become a Faculty Professor you will be making 5,000 francs (£200) a year, for two classes of an hour each, during nine months in the year, and all the rest of your time will be yours for reading and writing, whereas the life of a writer in Paris is the life of a cab-horse. But we must have a talk, old fellow, must we not ?

Perhaps I shall quarrel with Buloz,—he has printed nothing of mine for five months.

1860-1863

*Personal Notes.*

February 18, 1862.

The turn of my mind is French and Latin : ideas classed in regular and progressive files, after the fashion of naturalists, according to the rules of Ideologists, in short, *oratorically*.

I remember very well that when I was ten or eleven years old, in a damp back room at Rethel, I read with great interest a dissertation by I forget whom, on Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It was by some eighteenth century critic, and consisted in demonstrations and refutations, starting from certain principles.

M. Guizot's *History of Civilization* and Jouffroy's classes gave me my first great sensation of literary pleasure, on account of their progressive classifications.

The surplus comes from Philosophy : the object of my efforts is to reach the Essence, as the Germans say, not by scaling the rock, but by a broad, smooth drive ; to replace intuition, *insight*, and sudden abstraction (*Geistvernunft*) by oratorical analysis. But the road is hard to make.

For the last ten years (from twenty-four to thirty-four) the whole stream of my thoughts and education has been tending to transform the dry, abstract idea into a developed and living idea. It is the passage from a formula into life ; a skeleton was there which is now becoming covered with flesh.

Hence advantages and disadvantages.

October 10, 1862.

Perhaps I have made a mistake and taken the wrong road.

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There are several reasons to suppose that I have, at least partly.

Critics in general have said of me : " Forced, too systematic." Even those who were most favourably inclined towards me have said the same, and one should pay great attention and accord much confidence to the general impression of the public.

I have exhausted my brain, I am obliged to stop and remain idle several times a year, sometimes for three or four months ; I have remained for two whole years incapable of writing and even of reading. Writing requires a tremendous effort on my part, and after two or three hours, sometimes one hour only, I am obliged to leave off, having become quite unable to string two ideas together. My manner of writing must be contrary to nature, since it is so laborious. Several people, friends, have told me that it is strained, wearisome, and difficult to read. Assollant said, " It is like strong concentrated coffee, quite bitter " ; and " You have a cask of good wine and you turn it into brandy ! "

I find it much harder than formerly to put facts or ideas together. For instance, I am now trying to analyse Koeppen's book on *Buddhism*—mere schoolboy work—and it is like a heavy burden which I can hardly lift.

When I look within myself, it seems to me that the condition of my mind has changed, and that I have destroyed what oratorical and rhetorical talent I possessed. My ideas do not arrange themselves in regular lines as they used to do ; I have sudden streaks of light, vehement sensations and impulsive words ; in short, my mind resembles that of an artist far more than that of a writer. I struggle between

my past and my present tendencies. In principle, I try to string my ideas *à la* Macaulay, and at the same time I seek the vivid impressions of Stendhal, of poets and reconstructors; this contradiction leads me to constant efforts and very little result; if I succeed in reaching the necessary state of mind, it only lasts an hour or half an hour, and it kills me. It is probable that I have tried to unite two irréconcilable faculties, one must choose and be either an artist or an orator.

I think I have found the root of my complaint. For my fundamental idea has been that the particular passion or emotion of the man who is described should be reproduced, and all the degrees of logical generation stated; in fact, that a character should be painted after the manner of artists and constructed at the same time after the manner of reasoners. It is a true idea, and productive of powerful effects when it can be applied, but it is unhinging to the brain and we have no right to destroy ourselves.

If all this is correct, I must change my style, which is a serious undertaking. First, I must take some rest, a great deal of rest, then, out of the faculties which remain to me, see which are those that I can turn to profit.

I shall finish my *History of English Literature* in accordance with the former method; I only have three more articles to prepare out of eighteen, and the thing must be homogeneous. But after this work is finished I must change.

What is left to me? What talent? What facility?

There remains to me the habit of taking notes, of writing down my impressions, as I am doing now; I have several note-books in this style on France, and on England.

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Planat and M. Templier would have me publish them as they are. M. Templier said of me, "I am afraid to let him alter any thing, his vice is too much polishing up; he will spoil everything."

It is no trouble to me to take these notes; when an impression occurs to me it flows naturally on paper—words come of their own accord. Difficulty begins for me when I attempt to construct logically the system of my idea and to feel at the same time the appropriate kind of emotion.

There is a literary style, quite free from strain and very good in that the impressions and ideas are extremely fresh and sincere; it is that of Stendhal. Its drawback is that it is incoherent and obscure, unconvincing, and wanting in weight.

Could I at the same time, and in other subjects, go back to a simple oratorical style, the talent of a Professor and teacher, the art of demonstrating clearly and abundantly with natural and well marked classifications? That is what is wanted for the *Revue* and the *Journal des Débats*; the whole of my early education had tended to give it me, and I may be able to find it again.

It seems to me that I may be satisfied with this self-examination and make the following resolution: (1) to finish my three chapters; (2) to abandon my present style in favour of current notes and simple classification; (3) to make use of current notes for my *Contemporary England* and of simple classification for my *Psychology* and *Laws in History*.

October 1862.

† I have an ideal in Politics and in Religion, but I know

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it to be an impossible one in France ; that is why I can only live a speculative and not a practical life.

It is free Protestantism, as in Germany, under Schleiermacher, or almost as in England now ; local and municipal freedom, as in Belgium, Holland and England at this time, culminating in central representation.

But Protestantism is against the nature of Frenchmen, and local political life is against the constitution of Property and Society in France.

There is nothing to do but to soften down excessive centralization, to persuade the Government, in its own interest, to let some voices be heard, to minimize the violence of Catholicism and of anti-Catholicism, and to vegetate temperately.

One's forces must be directed elsewhere : towards Pure Science, beautiful style, certain sections of Art, elegant industry, a pleasant and agreeably social life, great, disinterested and universal ideas, in fine, towards the increase of general well-being.

*To Philarète Chasle.*

*Paris, October 28, 1862.*

DEAR SIR,—I shall be charmed to be criticized by you, and shall inform M. Hachette and M. de Sacy that you are kind enough to undertake it.

I hope you will oppose me ; such a discussion would be an honour. However, I draw your attention to the fact that this volume<sup>1</sup> is merely written from an *æsthetic* point of view, pure philosophy being quite in the background:

<sup>1</sup> The third edition of *La Fontaine et ses Fables*.



## LIFE AND LETTERS OF H. TAINÉ

You have often reproached me with denying the Beautiful and with placing madmen and great men, the Chinese and Shakespeare, on the same rank. My book, I believe, answers this objection ; I am so far from denying the Beautiful that I give its formula (p. 319), and the whole work is intended to prove and to explain this formula. Only it is a wide one and it admits all sorts of types. In my opinion the Beautiful is a fixed relation between variable terms, a *function*, as mathematicians would say, something like the cube or the square, which are things perfectly definite and fixed, but relative to variable numbers.

Now you see the tip of the devil's ear ! What a profanation it is to place Algebra in the very heart of Beauty ! But in my eyes there is nothing in the world but relations of this kind. The universe is an *a priori* which we look at *a posteriori*, a system of formulæ which appears to us a mere pile of events and beings. I feel that my boldness is justified when speaking to you ; a critic hears everything and often forgives everything.

I shall be most happy to receive you in my hermitage one day if you will honour it by a visit.

*To M. F. Guizot.*

*Paris, January 4, 1863.*

SIR,—Last year you had the kindness to introduce to Marshal Randon my candidature for the Literature Professor's chair at Saint Cyr ; he had accepted it and my appointment was almost certain, when it was suddenly realized that the present incumbent had not reached the age-limit ; so that there could be no appointment, there

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being no vacancy. I have these details from M. Durty, the Inspector-General, and General Blondel, who is head of the Department.

This year, those gentlemen, whose kindness to me is extreme, thought of me of their own accord in connexion with another post which is actually vacant—that of History and German Examiner for the St. Cyr admission examinations. They presented my name to the Marshal, who did not receive it so favourably as last year. It seems that some very passionate or scarcely sincere persons have lately been representing me as a very dangerous man, imbued with perverse opinions. Though the vacant duty is nothing but a mere verifying of the results of teaching, the Marshal became uneasy, and my candidature is compromised.

You know me well, Sir ; I have thought aloud to you in familiar conversation ; I make bold to affirm that, pen in hand and before the public, my thoughts have always been equally straightforward. I persist in thinking that writing should be free, and that it is an honourable thing to seek for truth, with all one's strength, and wherever it may be found. But I understand the conventionalities of a class and especially of an examination, and it seems to me that it would be extremely foolish to attempt a propaganda or to make a show of Scepticism in an interrogatory on the dates of French history or the rules of German grammar.

If you thought fit to present this plea to the Marshal, and if you consider, as I trust you do, that free historical and philosophical research is not incompatible with a public post, you would, Sir, be adding one more kindness to the many obligations to you under which I am fortunate enough to lie.

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I beg you to accept, Sir, the assurance of my devotion and respect.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, February 22, 1863.*

DEAR OLD ÉDOUARD,—Thank you for thinking of me and for all those details ; I felt sure that you would settle down at Aix, but I thought you would have had a few introductions through Prévost. By the bye, you say nothing of his chances of election at Aix.

You have heard of my misfortunes ; I only just failed with the École Polytechnique ; the General backed me, but M. Leverrier, with his vehement denunciation of the last pages of my *Lord Byron*, carried away two hesitating voters. Besides this, there was a woman behind the scenes—a Catholic woman, I mean. Another attempt to obtain a History Professorship at the École des Beaux Arts failed equally. At the present time, M. Duruy, the General who is head of the School and the General who is head of the War Office Department, are backing me for the post of History and German Examiner at Saint Cyr, which happens to be vacant. Unfortunately, at the last moment, the Marshal has been prejudiced against me. I am evidently a monster. The affair will be decided in a few days. I do not in the least know what is going to happen.

I wanted to test myself, or I would not have attempted those three candidatures ; I wished to know whether I was possible or not, and whether my opinions absolutely excluded me from any public post. If it is so, I shall return to my monkish life and give up all hopes of a lucrative career.

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I have worked a great deal in the last four months, and without too much fatigue. I have written an article of ninety pages on the Renaissance in England ; another, eighty pages long, on Drama, and half another lengthy paper on the Reformation, which is to be the last. So I am nearing the end, but there are gaps on the road. I still have to write a long piece about Milton, and three short ones on Temple, Otway, and Sheridan.

What a long time I have given to that book ! Was I wise ? It has taught me a great deal of History. But Philosophy was better, and I shall certainly return to it.

I have seen Renan and Flaubert rather intimately this winter—Flaubert especially, who is a very good fellow, very straightforward. But I do not go out much more than you do ; you will judge of that by the fact that I have only been three times to the Italian Opera, though I am on the free list.

You say nothing of the work you are doing or intending to do outside your classes. How about *Couper* ? I fancy your XVIth Century will provide you with subjects for articles.

*To his Mother.*

*Marseilles, September 1863.*

I am in Marseilles for the examinations. The work is always the same, mechanical, rather fatiguing towards the end of the day on account of the continuity of attention which it requires. The great number of objects which we see, the variety of surroundings and the change from one hotel to another are all a little trying to weak nerves. But I am well on the whole.

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I often come across old schoolfellows ; there is one at Marseilles—Ponsot, a good fellow, who is Professor of Philosophy ; I dined with him yesterday, and he dines with me to-morrow. I learn a good deal of the customs of each town ; these men tell me all that they have seen, all that they know—it pleases them and interests me at the same time. I take notes of it all, and would send you them if they were not rather too special, and intended to provide me with materials later on.<sup>1</sup>

I have not read a newspaper and do not know what is happening in politics. The best of it all is that this change of surroundings and occupations will probably give me back my strength for the brain-work I intend to do next year. But I shall have to work hard immediately after my return. The printers are very slow, and I am not on the spot to hurry them.

Marseilles is an enormous town, and there are grander and more magnificent houses in its principal streets than in the Rue de Rivoli in Paris. People here make a lot of money in mercantile speculation and the town is growing visibly. There is much luxury ; my friends tell me that no city is coarser or more materialistic.

My time has been so much taken up that I have not had a moment to visit the port. We shall have a free day on Saturday, and Ponsot and I are planning out an excursion, but the sun is overpowering.

<sup>1</sup> Some of these notes were published after Taine's death under the title *Carnets de voyage*.

## CHAPTER V

1864-1866

Visit to Italy—The *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise* fails to obtain the Bordin Prize—Lectures at the École des Beaux-Arts—Critical Essays—The *Philosophie de l'Art*—Incident at Saint Cyr—Various Essays—Publication of the *Nouveaux Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, of the *Voyage en Italie* and of the *Philosophie de l'Art en Italie*—Correspondence

TAINÉ had just completed one of his great works, the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*; only the volume on the *Contemporains* remained to be printed; he therefore resolved to allow himself a few months' holiday, if we may so call his visit to Italy, which was in reality work, of a different kind, but quite as absorbing as his usual labour. He prepared himself for it by readings and by visits to the Louvre and to the Cabinet des Estampes. He studied in his portfolios the collection of engravings which he had accumulated with loving care ever since his boyhood and

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to which, while a student, he had devoted his first savings. During his long periods of suffering and enforced idleness he had often, when looking at this collection, dreamed of those noble Italian landscapes, the harmonious frames of that classical humanity in the study of which his mind had been nurtured. He was at last to see them, and, with them, the masterpieces of art of which he only possessed poor reproductions.

Before starting on his journey, he wrote his articles on Stendhal (in the *Nouvelle Revue de Paris*, afterwards published in the *Nouveaux Essais*) and on Buddhism (*Journal des Débats* and *Nouveaux Essais*); he left Paris on the 10th February, embarked at Marseilles for Civita Vecchia, and reached Rome on the 16th. The very bad weather rendered walks uninviting, and, as he chiefly required rest and the open air, he only remained two or three days in Rome, and started for Naples, where he found a milder climate. He spent about ten days there and returned to Rome, by the Monte Cassino. During this second stay in Rome he heard of the death of Franz Woepke, the learned German philologist, who had become his friend, and of whose intellect and character he had a high opinion; he devoted a few sorrow-stricken lines in the *Débats* to his memory, and the sad event cast a gloom over the rest of his journey. This time he spent a whole month in Rome, and afterwards journeyed through Umbria to Florence, Parma, Bologna, Padua and Venice. The letters printed below and the two volumes of the *Voyage* will spare us the task of dilating at greater length on those three months of excursions and study. At the beginning of May, Taine came back to Paris by way of the Simplon, laden with an ample harvest

of impressions, noted as usual in little pocket-books; later on he drew from them the substance of his lectures at the École des Beaux Arts and of his *Voyage en Italie*.

On his return, he had the disappointment of seeing the Académie Française refuse the Bordin prize, for which he had competed with his *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. This book, though defended by Sainte Beuve and M. Guizot, was violently denounced by M. de Falloux and Mgr. Dupanloup, and this time again, as in the case of the essay on Titus Livius, the Academy postponed awarding the prize until the following year, when, however, M. Taine did not deem it expedient to invite defeat once more. At least he had the satisfaction of seeing his work estimated at its just value by highly competent men, such as Schérer, Montégut, and above all Sainte Beuve, whose three splendid articles (in the *Nouveaux Lundis*) were his greatest reward. He had set to work again, correcting the last volume of the *Littérature Anglaise*, continuing the Notes on Paris, of which fragments appeared in the *Vie Parisienne* and publishing in the *Journal des Débats* an article on Auguste Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, which has not been reprinted. His Saint-Cyr examination tour, during which he barely had time to write a few pages for Marcelin's paper, interrupted his work, and it was only on his return to Paris, at the end of September, that he began editing his notes on Italy. He arranged with M. Buloz to have them published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, where they appeared regularly from December 1864 to March 1866.

It happened soon afterwards that he found further use for his studies on art in Italy, Belgium, Holland and the London and Paris museums; the Minister of Fine Art



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was at that time greatly embarrassed, the Superintendent, M. de Nieuwerkerke, having lately introduced great changes into the regulations of the School of Fine Arts. The students considered that the recent innovations were detrimental to their interests, and, rightly or wrongly, attributed to the influence of Viollet-le-Duc<sup>1</sup> the alterations to which they objected. The latter had been appointed Professor of *Æsthetics* and of the History of Art. When he attempted to take his Professor's chair, violent protestations burst out among the students, and the lecturer, pelted with baked apples, his voice drowned in violent hooting, was obliged to give up his post after two or three sittings as tumultuous as the first. The regulations were not altered, but it was decided to give to Viollet-le-Duc a successor who would be a *persona grata* with the students. M. Duruy, at that time Minister of Public Education, persuaded Marshal Vaillant, his colleague at the Beaux Arts, that, among possible candidates, M. Taine was perhaps the most capable of reconciling malcontents; his appointment was signed on the 28th October, 1864. M. Duruy's wise provisions were soon realized. When Taine, a little nervous on his first appearance before a numerous audience under such apparently unfavourable conditions, made his *début* in January 1865, he was welcomed by a thunder of applause;

<sup>1</sup> Viollet-le-Duc (Eugène Emmanuel), architect, b. 1814, d. 1879, the author of the *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'Architecture* and the restorer of Notre Dame, of the walls of Carcassonne, etc. He was considered at that time as the leader of a school, and an adversary of Classicism, which was then chiefly represented by the members of the Académie des Beaux Arts. The new regulations minimized the privileges of the Institut and its influence on the teaching in the School.

his opening lecture on "Works of Art" was but one long oration, which was not confined to the interior of the École; when he left the building, the students, cheering and shouting, followed his cab, in spite of the pouring rain, as far as the peaceful Rue Bretonvilliers, which was little accustomed to such noisy invasions. The cordial intercourse thus established between Professor and pupils was never weakened during the twenty years of his teaching, and he was always listened to with religious respect. He opened his series of lectures by "Painting in Italy," to which he devoted three years, completing the course by one year's study of "Art in the Netherlands," and one more on "Art in Greece." He recommenced this five years' cycle four times, often recasting the whole plan of his lessons, utilising fresh documents discovered in the course of his reading, and always seeking further improvements, with the conscientiousness which he brought into his teaching as into all his writings.

Preparation for these classes and the editing of his *Voyage en Italie* absorbed the greater part of his time, until the examination tour in 1865, he wrote a few articles for the *Journal des Débats*, however, which should be mentioned here, on *les Mémoires de Dumont de Bostaquet*, Fustel de Coulanges' *Cité Antique*, Strauss' *Vie de Jésus*, Renaud de Montauban, Camille Selden's *Esprit des Femmes de notre temps*, Émile Barrault's *Christ*, Joseph Bertrand's *Fondateurs de l'Astronomie*, and *Léonard de Vinci*. He also began to rewrite his École des Beaux Arts lectures, which he published in 1882 under the title: *Philosophie de l'Art*.

The third Saint Cyr examination tour very nearly did

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not take place. Tainé's adversaries had not given up the struggle; we have seen that they had just triumphed over him in the matter of the Academy prize. The young Professor's growing fame, Mgr. Dupanloup's attacks, perhaps also the success of the classes at the *École des Beaux Arts* excited hostility anew, and the Minister for War was ultimately circumvented. He wrote to M. Tainé in March 1865, informing him that, desirous of increasing the military element in the Commission, he now put an end to his appointment in order to replace him by an officer. In spite of the pretext thus courteously alleged, other letters from Marshal Randon leave no doubt as to the denunciations of which Tainé had been the object; the Marshal himself mentions the incident in his *Memoirs* (with an error in the date), and inserts the letter which the Emperor Napoleon III wrote to him on that occasion.

*The Emperor, to Marshal Randon.*

*May 20, 1865.*

MY DEAR MARSHAL,—There are some small measures which, very gratuitously, occasion hostility towards the Government. Among such measures I may cite the dismissal of M. Tainé from his functions of Examiner for Saint Cyr. M. Tainé is a distinguished man who numbers many friends among *savants* and literary men. I desire that he should be maintained in the post which he has filled with distinction. . . .

It is needless to add that M. Tainé kept his post. But although he did not wish to be for the second time a victim of disloyal manœuvres, he did not care to go on

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with this very absorbing work, which, added to the *École des Beaux Arts* lectures, prevented him from undertaking the great work on which he had been meditating for so long. He, therefore, of his own accord, gave up his post at St. Cyr, much the more lucrative of the two, after the 1866 examination tour, and only retained his Art Professorship.

After the 1865 tour, Taine published his *Nouveaux Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, consisting of the ten principal articles which had appeared from 1857 to 1864. He also wrote a few more critiques, one of them being an account of Ottfried Müller's *History of Greek Literature* translated into French by Karl Hillebrand, a very distinguished young German Professor, with whom, until the Franco-German war, Taine was on terms of intimate friendship. Other articles treated of Hector Malot's early novels, Guillaume Guizot's lectures and Renan's *Apôtres*. He also wrote an important preface for the second edition of the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*. Lastly, *Naples et Rome*, the first volume of the *Voyage en Italie* was published at the end of January, 1866; the second volume was to follow in November after the concluding articles had appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The small volume on *La Philosophie de l'Art en Italie* dates also from November 1866. Besides all this the year's work included studies on Philarète Chasle, La Bruyère, Charles Clément, and Mme. d'Aulnoy's *Voyages en Espagne*.

But now, free from other literary labours, and from his examination work, Taine was at last able to take up again the loved study which he had put aside with so much

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regret—the *Intelligence*, to which he was to give up more than three years, from 1867 to 1870.

*To his Mother.*

*Naples, February 21, 1864.*

: : . The weather at Rome was bad, rainy and misty, and it spoilt the aspect of the landscape. I assure you that this journey goes against the grain with me ; there is an emptiness about it, and much mental and bodily fatigue ! So far, it is a land of dirty beggars and tenacious filibusters ; the sun is absent, and only sunshine could make it endurable.

I remained in Rome one day longer than I had expected on account of my passport. I found two artists for whom I had letters of introduction, M. Coquart and M. Bellay ; the latter did the honours of Rome. I had a fair glimpse of it during those three days ; I will go there again at the beginning of next month and study the place. Study is the right word, I have already been buying some books. My eyes are not good enough for enjoyment, and I also suffer from a hasty imagination, which takes the bloom off everything. For instance, I must own that I found some things less beautiful in reality than in the engravings I had seen. It is very unfortunate that the weather should be as bad as in Paris, only milder. I have but once seen the blue sky. Last night the wind was so strong that several window-panes were broken. Yesterday, between Rome and Naples, it rained nearly all the time ; the country is no doubt beautiful in the summer ; but at present looks like a skeleton, bare against the dull clouds.

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Yet I do not think I did wrong to come ; I wanted a change, I was beginning to feel ill. It is probable that I shall not remain here as long as I thought, if this wind and rain continue. I can attempt no excursions, but merely a working tour. I must have some relaxation before I set to work again.

*To his Mother.*

*Rome, March 7, 1864.*

. . . Will you be so kind as to buy me the *Nation* for February 22, and the number of the *Pays* which contains M. Barbey d'Aurevilly's article ? Please buy me all the articles mentioned to you as being important ; keep Madame de Witt's letter, and place it in the copy of my book which is in the library : it will be useful to me for a future edition.

I spent about twelve days in Naples, and was received, quite unexpectedly, by M. Marc Monnier with the most attentive and liberal hospitality. Leaving Naples on the Wednesday, I spent one day at the Convent of Monte Cassino. Renan had given me a letter for the Abbot, Dom Tosti, who was most kind ; it was the best day I have had. The Abbey is on a mountain ; it takes an hour to ride up to it on a donkey. When I opened my window in the morning I saw the sun rising over an amphitheatre of mountains. The most beautiful works of art do not impress me nearly as much as Nature.

Here I am back in Rome, with better weather this time ; it is like the beginning of May in France. My rooms are in the Piazza Barberini, next door to a French captain ; my landlord and his wife are rather poor people, who have

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invested their savings in the embellishment of their front rooms and who themselves sleep in rat-holes at the back: On the Piazza an old-fashioned black Triton squirts a water-jet. Carriages pass on their way to the country; grey-bearded monks in their long, brown robes walk slowly by. Peasants in goatskins, their feet in sandals, drive oxen harnessed to primitive waggons; pigeons swarm on the pavement; some carpenters are mending chariot wheels in a corner. On the opposite side is the monumental door of the stables of the Palazzo Barberini, and the roof of the palace itself is to be seen on the left. A number of houses appear one above the other in every position, of every shape, surmounted by a sort of terrace, on which linen hangs out to dry. On the horizon a large pine-tree, a campanile and two church domes appear. I am describing all this, it is the best account I can give you of Rome: a large village with palaces, fountains, and monuments forgotten centuries ago; the whole scattered and natural-looking on account of the wonderful variety. Photographs of this would look like landscapes by Sébastien Le Clerc, Pérelle, and Callot, such as I have in my portfolios.

I spent twelve days in Naples, seeing many things and taking many notes. Two complete days of fine weather—one at Pompeii, and one at Sorrento. Pompeii is instructive, and Sorrento is charming, full of orange-trees laden with fruit, and the blue sea all round. My classical memories came back to me and added beauty to the beautiful surroundings. I thought of Ulysses, of Circe and the Sirens; you will see all this in my notes. And yet, to speak accurately, those notes are false; they do not re-

present the state of my mind ; they only express temporary moods, ideas which seemed to me to be interesting, *leit-motifs* which might develop into melodies later on. They reveal the artist and the observer, not the man. The real man is very unlike the picture ; he feels as if he were being submerged. Every morning and every evening I am like a violin of which the pegs are too small ; having become worn out from being constantly turned, they no longer bite the wood, but slip and let the strings become loose, so loose that the sound is spoilt and often altogether absent.

This afternoon I shall pay some official calls ; on these occasions I always feel as if I were a speaking automaton, or rather as if my *ego* were stationed outside, whilst a carefully dressed gentleman is making bows and polite speeches on his behalf. Never have I felt so deeply how empty all this is. My youth is far behind me now, and that curiosity, that desire for knowledge which seemed to me to be man's whole being, has barely left a trace in me. I think myself ridiculous for being interested in ancient Romans, in the question whether or not Italy will become a free State ; I might as well solve chess-problems, which is, after all, the only thing which I have a right to decide.

To tell the truth, I am not experiencing much pleasure, my machinery is too worn out. Yesterday I was so stiff that I had to stay in bed or in an armchair all the afternoon, and again all this morning ; merely to write a letter necessitates an effort. My eyes ache, my attention becomes exhausted, and discomfort and *spleen* ensue. Do not be anxious, however. As I shall be here until the end of the month, I shall take things very easily, smoking, sleeping, and often reading in my room.



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Nevertheless, I think that, for a man brought up as I have been, the disillusion is great; things always seem more beautiful at a distance; and, moreover, one has to be accustomed to certain disadvantages in order to pass them over; for instance, the smell of rotten cabbage and decaying fish which pervades Rome, the braying of certain singers in the Sistine Chapel, which, I am told, disguises very fine music, the state of dilapidation of the frescoes of the greatest masters, which takes away three quarters of their effect, the ridiculous and detestable ornamentation of the churches, which are absolutely heaped up with gilt horrors, etc., etc.

The interest lies in conversations; I obtain all sorts of details of the life here from people who have been here for ten years. This evening I am going to Duke Gaëtani's. I was to have gone last night to M. Schnetz at the Academy, to meet General Bertin, but I was too tired. On the whole, if my body and mind were in good working order, I ought to be content here, and it is my own fault if I am not.

Do try to get me news of my poor Woepke, through Planat.

*To Marc Monnier.<sup>1</sup>*

*Rome, March 15, 1864.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I began like a hungry man, by swallowing as much of Rome as I could; now that this first hunger is somewhat appeased and that I am at last settled in comfortable rooms, allow me to bring myself to your remembrance and also to that of the many kind people

<sup>1</sup> Marc Monnier, writer, b. 1827, d. 1885, was then the correspondent of the *Journal des Débats* at Naples.

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whom I met at your house. I owe them a great deal, and have hardly any means of expressing my gratitude save by speaking of it.

I dined with the Ambassador, who, knowing that I had just returned from Naples, wished to know what I had seen there. I enumerated to him what you had told me and what I had seen of Schools, the University, the National Guard, the Army, etc. The great objection which they make here and which I have met with in several places is this: people think that there are three or four Italies, that a Neapolitan cannot look upon a Piedmontese as a compatriot, and that this body, violently and artificially composed, will one day fall into pieces. I answered that the *bourgeoisie*, which leads the movement, is patriotic, not by instinct, but by reflection, that the Italian Revolution has its origin in the importation of European civilization and not in a racial awakening, that for that reason, Liberalism here is abstract and not local, and that the question resolves itself into a proclamation of principles.

See whether I am right, and discuss the subject in your Naples letters.

I am told that in Paris, in the Emperor's immediate surroundings, people are always talking of an Italian Federation.

I go into Society a little, and meet very Liberal people. Their detractors declare that they are so in words only, and that the talent of a Roman consists in declaiming without ever risking his skin or spending a *sou*. You must judge of this for yourself; I can only hear what people say. It is only about the past, classical Antiquity and the sixteenth century that I find real documents.

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Offer my respects to Mme. Monnier and Mme. Meyer, and my kind remembrances to M. Ecoffey and M. Monaco, and believe me, my dear Sir,

Your most affectionate and devoted servant.

*To his Mother.*

*Rome, Good Friday, March 25, 1864.*

I shall start for Florence next Friday, April 1, passing through Foligno, Perugia and Siena. I shall arrive about the 4th and stay until the 15th or thereabouts.

I have dined once with the Ambassador, once with Count Campello and four times with Duke Gaëtani, who is most kind to me. He is the only Liberal Roman Prince; a pen might be useful to him. I have been to six or eight evening receptions, amongst others to the great official reception at the Embassy. I have seen museums, villas, palaces, churches; I have been to Frascati; to-morrow I am going to Albano, in fact I am sight-seeing most conscientiously.

I heard the *Miserere* yesterday and the day before. It is terrible, one has to stand for three hours in a suffocating crowd; I have seen people going away after two hours' waiting, just when the *Miserere* began, because they felt faint. The music is worth it all, it is so strange and so sublime.

When I have a little leisure, I read in my rooms; I have bought and borrowed books. Modern Rome is almost entirely the work of Popes and their nephews since 1560; Mr. Odo Russell has lent me Ranke's excellent history; I read Vasari's *Lives of Painters*, etc. . . . I am trying to learn a great deal, and I do learn, but not so much as in England,

partly because I read with more difficulty, not being so conversant with the language, and partly, I think, because my machinery is somewhat blunted.

The French officers have introduced me to their Club, where I can read the papers. I see that M. Sainte Beuve has not yet written his article about me. Have the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and other reviews published anything? German and English reviews announce forthcoming articles.

What you tell me of my poor Woepke grieves me very much. I had written to tell him that if he should want anything in my absence he was to go to you. He is not poor; he has a good income, I believe; but alone, ill, with only a porter to look after him. . . . ! !

I shall probably make use of this summer and the intervals between the examinations in writing about this tour.

*To his Mother.*

*Florence, April 7, 1864.*

I arrived at Florence last evening, having spent six days on the journey, through the Umbrian Mountains, Assisi, Perugia and Siena, where I found real mediævalism like Dante and Thomas à Kempis. I admired and liked it immensely. It is probable that never at any time did man dream more touching and sublime dreams; it is not this kind of Christianity from which I shrink; it is sincere and poetical, and, in its own way, worth all that Greece and the Renaissance ever produced. But the Catholicism of Rome is unpleasing and irritating; St. Peter's itself is theatrical. As to the three hundred other churches,

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they were nearly all built, restored, or modernized since the time of Tasso ; from that moment, the Popes, who until then had lived voluptuously and freely, like artists and courtiers, became devout, constraining all boldness of mind, and established everywhere the priestly spirit, that is, an exterior decency, a religion of words and rites ; so that all the literary or artistic works of that time are poor, devoid of true inspiration, generally pompous and Jesuitical, mere objects of parade and decoration, intended to impress the public.

On the contrary, what I see at Florence, like what I saw at Siena, Perugia and Assisi, gives me the keenest pleasure ; after true Christianity, true Paganism, force and sincerity on both sides. My readings are coming back to my mind ; I am trying to read more, and am beginning to read Italian easily and rapidly. This tour is a History course for me. And, to tell the truth, I do not understand what people who are neither artists nor historians come here for ; they must be bored to death. I have seen a great many works of art ; my artistic sensitiveness is about the average, my artistic culture greater than the average, and yet I feel that without History I should not enjoy myself much. Knowledge of the past and of ancient customs gives me a medium in which to revive the creators of beautiful works ; a side path brings me to the *feeling* for the work ; faces and forms enter into a system of ideas and observations which brings them into high relief. I study and learn. I wonder what other tourists do ! At Rome, on the top of Caracalla's Baths, I saw an English family ; the father, a man who had made his fortune, tired, stiff but performing a duty. When he reached the top, he

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stood motionless, leaning for rest on his walking-stick, glad that he had obeyed orders and Murray. The daughter and her mother studied and named after the guide-book all the neighbouring hills and localities, as a schoolboy would look out names on a map.

There are a number of English, German, Swiss, and even French people here. The table d'hôte is none the merrier. They do not talk, they eat, and look at each other under the crude light. Yet I shall meet a few people. The French Consul, M. Poujade, whom I saw in his office, has asked-me to his house. I assure you that I am studying conscientiously and drawing information from every source. If I do not know Italy when I leave it, it will not be for lack of questioning, reading, looking around me and writing. My note-books are swelling visibly, but a lot of my notes are worthless and fit to be thrown away.

Work is the only restorative ; for me, at least, it alone is absorbing and useful. I am reviving here because I am doing some History. The recent sight of the sincere and passionate Christianity of the thirteenth century, the magnificent originality, the bold and prodigal invention of the Siena Cathedral, all this evocation of an ancient buried people has moved me. It is good to dream, to build for the future, to shake off the present, even when, like Woepke, we cannot complete our edifice ; it supports us and pushes us forward.

Poor Woepke ! his death has caused me great sorrow. I learned it suddenly, by chance, reading a newspaper in a café ; it almost choked me. The next day, I felt I must at least do homage to his memory and tell the public, who had not known him, what he was and what he would have

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become. I wrote an article which I sent to the *Journal des Débats*, and I posted it as I was leaving Rome. It should have arrived by now. I asked that it might be inserted as soon as possible. Take care of his Dante for me; it is my only souvenir of him.

I walked from Perugia to Assisi—a four hours' walk. I talked with peasants, tradespeople, officers, went into the houses of the poor, of the middle class, etc., so as to see the country better. It is not unlike France; our provincial towns, villages, and peasants, especially in the south, are not superior to them in cleanliness and comfort. Political passion is very keen; the whole of the middle classes, all who can read a paper, except a few nobles, are in favour of the new Italian Kingdom. I have filled three books with notes, of which I shall probably make something.

*To Ernest Renan.*

*Florence, April, 1864.*

MY DEAR RENAN,—The bearer of this letter is M. Challemel-Lacour, one of my old comrades at the École Normale. He is a candidate for the French Literature Professorship at Turin, which depends on M. Amari, a *savant* who is a particular acquaintance of yours; I earnestly beg that you will give M. Challemel your support in that direction.

I spoke of M. Challemel about two years ago in the *Journal des Débats*, and I may say that, of all the young men I have known, none has given greater promise of eloquence. I do not speak of his education, which is complete, nor of his positive degrees which are numerous;

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I will only say this, that he has a talent of the first order for public speaking, and that no one excels him in excellence of delivery, natural perfection of style and the art of securing the interest of his hearers. Now, the Chair in question is a failing one, the present incumbent, though a learned man, has let it drop for want of talent. It needs a man who will raise it again, and, in my opinion, M. Challeme! is obviously the very man to do so. He spoke five or six times in Paris, notably at the Salon des Arts Unis, Rue de Provence, and all his hearers shared my opinion.

I need not add that he knows German perfectly, and has made a special study of German philosophy as well as of German literature. Italians are turning their attention in that direction nowadays, and he would be a great acquisition.

*To his Mother.*

*Padua, April 19, 1864.*

To-morrow I shall be at Venice, where I shall spend about ten days, returning to Paris about May 10, viâ Milan and probably the Simplon and Geneva.

I stayed in Florence for ten days, and saw a quantity of pictures and a few palaces, giving up one day to Pisa. The theatre at Florence is not at all bad ; it only costs one franc to see a comedy, and two francs to see an opera ; I went two or three times.

Florence is a charming town, bright and yet picturesque, much pleasanter than Rome. My tour has provided me with many interesting sensations but no agreeable ones. I have learnt a great deal and enjoyed very little . . . . .



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there were a thousand worries, petty thefts, physical discomfort and ocular fatigue. The only happiness for me lies in action, and the only rest in a country life. The broad green meadows and budding poplar-trees I saw to-day on my way to Padua have already revived me.

From Florence, I went to Bologna, and thence to Ravenna, to see some fifth century churches and mosaics. Where can be the pleasure of seeing such things if one is not a professional critic or historian. In truth I ask myself why my fellow-tourists travel !

To-morrow I shall see Giotto's frescoes and start at four o'clock for Venice. Imagine a course of lectures on Italian History, with Painting instead of Literature for materials, and you will have an idea of my journey. In my spare moments, I read some Italian memoirs.

I should like to know whether my short article on Woepke has yet appeared in the *Débats* ; it must be published as soon as possible ; it is like a funeral oration which cannot be postponed.

I shall be thirty-six on the day after to-morrow. The strong and healthy part of my life is over ; the second part, which is now beginning, will soon be on the downhill road, but I may yet achieve something if I work hard enough and if my strength does not fail me. I have two or three ideas in my mind which I should like to leave after me when I am gone.

I have written to no one, not even to Planat or in reply to M. Havet. After I have spent four or five hours looking at monuments or pictures and taking notes, not only my neck, my back and my feet ache, but my attention is exhausted and I am incapable of any ideas ; I have to

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sit with my eyes closed or to smoke whilst sipping a cup of coffee.

*To his Mother.*

*Venice, April 26, 1864.*

I have worked a great deal since I have been in Italy. I shall bring home six little note-books, and hope to do something with them; I read the language easily now. The people do not attract me very much, the women not at all; they are like exaggerated Frenchwomen—more wilful, more conceited, and of singular assurance and volubility. The men are delightful in their appearance and dress: they have the political spirit, but military courage and the spirit of discipline are the doubtful point. Certainly, the whole middle class, all who can read a book, are against the fallen powers—Austria and the Pope. Those powers indeed were their natural enemies, and offered them no outlet for their energies, no careers, many prisons and an incessant inquisition. They are trying to convert the peasants, who are mere savages, to their ideas; the priests and the highest aristocracy are of course clerical and absolutists, but they are losing ground. The new machinery may be broken by some political accident when Napoleon III dies; but my opinion is that it will be mended, and that, in a century or two, it will work very passably.

Austria seems here more tolerant than it is said to be. I saw at Padua, in a bookseller's shop-window, an engraving of Garibaldi and Alexandre Dumas, Garibaldi compared to Cincinnatus. The *Vie de Jésus*, *le Maudit*, *Littre*, etc., are advertised freely. It is true that *le Maudit* is not allowed in Italian. I find here, in a café, the *Journal des*

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*Débats* and a paper in French, called *l'Italie*, which is very abusive of Austria.

*To M. Ernest Havet.*

*Venice, April 29, 1864.*

MY DEAR MASTER,—Your letter has been chasing me, and; when I received it, I was myself on a journey. Forgive this long delay, which you had foreseen. A man who is seeing a new country, going out in society, spending his days in sight-seeing, and his evenings in reading and taking notes, finds himself so tired after it all, especially if his health is not of the best, that he neglects his correspondence, however delightful it may be, and relies upon the indulgence of his friends.

I have seen nearly the whole of Italy, Naples and its neighbourhood, Rome, Assisi, Perugia, Siena, Pisa, Florence, Bologna, Ravenna, Padua, and Venice. Before returning, through Verona and Milan, I am taking a whole day's rest, which gives me an opportunity of writing to you. It would be difficult to epitomize so many impressions; Italy offers them on almost every epoch in History, on Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Catholic Restoration. I have found in monuments, pictures and statues a second Literature, which completes and comments on the other, but I can only tell you about it all, in detail, when I see you. As to modern and political Italy, my opinion is that every *bourgeois*, functionary or tradesman, any one who can read a paper, is in favour of Italian Unity and a United Constitutional Monarchy. The Italians have a fine political sense, and there is, perhaps, not one Republican in fifteen men. There is in this country

no root for Socialism or for levelling ideas ; they are not in the national temperament, and there is a sort of general good-fellowship, of antique familiarity, between the rich and the poor, the aristocracy and the people, which leaves no future to Mazzini and to 1793 ideas. Neither do I believe in Provincialism ; they all feel that as long as they do not become a great, armed nation, they will, as before, offer an easy prey to any invader.

A considerable part of the *noblesse*, even in the old Papal Provinces, is constitutional and Liberal. Only a few old-fashioned aristocrats, relations of Cardinals, are for the Pope. In Spoleto, for instance, there are but two. But the Roman aristocracy, except for four families, is papal. Add to that the majority of the clergy, the crowd of *protégés* whom those great families support, and, in the provinces, the majority of the peasants, brutal savages, far more uncivilized than ours.

It is in that direction that the governing middle-class are turning all their efforts ; every man who learns to read is looked upon by them as a recruit ; that is why they are establishing elementary schools everywhere. Italians learn very rapidly ; experience has shown that a Neapolitan, even an adult, can learn to read and write in three months. Two other powerful institutions—the National Guard and the Army—act in the same direction ; they constitute a school of honour and cleanliness for the men of the people. They are also counting a great deal, especially in Naples, on the increase of public riches. As soon as a peasant has a little land or a little money, his ideas become those of a *bourgeois*. The cultivation of cotton, the great public works, the new impulse to private and public activity, the

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sale of ecclesiastical property, all contribute to this great change. If France will only prevent Austria for the next ten years from invading Italy, they calculate that the number of Liberals will be doubled and the nation formed.

This is the most likely version that I have been able to extricate from numerous contradictions and exaggerations, in the course of conversations with people of all classes, from the greatest noble to the smallest tradesman, from a journalist to a priest. But I still need to read and to think a great deal, before my opinion is absolutely firm, and I hope to do so on my return.

I am sincerely grateful to you for your criticisms and observations (on the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*) ; I have thought about them several times and will think of them again ; I have nothing to say about the parts which you approve of, save that your admiration is too excessive ; as to the point to which you object, I hesitate to give in, my reason being that I only half understand your objection. You perceive both my philosophy—that is, the general tendency of my ideas,—and my system ; you admit the first, and you reject the second. I should like a few things made clear. I never declared that History and Moral Science offered theorems analogous to geometrical ones. History is not a science similar to Geometry, but to Physiology and Geology. Just as there are fixed but not numerically measurable relations between the organs and the functions of a living body, likewise are there precise but not numerically measurable relations between the groups of facts which comprise social and moral life. I expressly said so in my Preface, distinguishing exact science from inexact science, that is, those branches of science which

belong to the mathematical group and those which group themselves around History, both operating on quantities, but the first on measurable quantities and the second on unmeasurable quantities. The question therefore reduces itself to this: is it possible to establish precise but unmeasurable relations between moral groups, i.e. Religion, Philosophy, the social state, etc., of a century or of a nation? Those precise, general and necessary relations are what I, after Montesquieu, call *laws*; it is also the name given to them in Zoology or Botany. My Preface sets-out the system of these Historical Laws, the general connexion of great events, the causes of these connexions, the classification of these causes, and, in short, the conditions of human transformation and development. Is all this true? On my return I shall solicit your judgment and criticism on the subject. You quote as an example my parallel between Shakespeare's psychological conception and that of our French classics, and you say that those are not laws; they are types, and I have done what zoologists do when, taking fishes and mammals, for instance, they extract from the whole class and its innumerable species an ideal type, an abstract form common to all, persisting in all, whose different features are connected afterwards, to show how the unique type, combined with special circumstances, must produce the species. That is a scientific construction similar to mine; I do not, any more than they, claim to guess at a living being without having seen and dissected it; but, like them, I endeavour to indicate the general types on which living beings are built, and my method of construction or reconstruction has the same range together, with the same limits.

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Forgive an author who is defending his ideas ; or, rather, no, you have nothing to forgive, for I conscientiously believe that an author's vanity has nothing to do with the above. I adhere to my idea because I believe it to be true and capable—if it should, later on, fall into good hands—of producing good fruit. It has been lying on the ground since Montesquieu's time, and I have picked it up, that is all. As to the talent which you praise in me, I do not believe in it much ; I am too well acquainted with real artists, prolific brains, capable of conceiving living works, to acknowledge myself one of them.

I shall be in Paris in about twelve days, and will come and see you almost immediately. I hope that Madame Havet's health is better, and that your own continues to be good. As for me, I have been patched up after being broken in several places and am trying to keep the whole together.

*To his Mother:*

*Paris, May 10, 1864.*

I am well, and have brought home seven little notebooks of which I hope to make something. I intend to read a great deal in the libraries these two months, so as to complete the information I have collected. I now have a general idea of the country and of its history ; one could write something like my *Voyage aux Pyrénées*, but longer and more chatty. I shall consult my friends about it.

It was time I came back ; I longed to be at home ; hotel life and constant travelling soon become intolerable, and, also, my business wanted looking after. I have been reading the articles on my book ; they are not particularly

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kind, and, if it sold well, it was not thanks to them. But I am sorry to see that my friends, Sainte Beuve, Prévost-Paradol, Schérer, and Montégut, have forgotten me ; one has to be constantly on the spot, as I am now.

I spent ten days in Venice ; it is the place I enjoyed most because of all its water. I love water beyond everything, and paintings of it appeal to me more than any others. I had a letter for M. Locatelli, the manager of the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* ; he gave me a lot of statistical and political information. Thence I went to Verona and Milan. I only stayed in Milan for two days, and could not present my letter of introduction to Countess M. On the other hand, I had found at Venice a Milanese Marchesa who was spending six months in a hotel for her health ; the air in Venice is very mild, and winter in Milan very cold. She unwittingly became a very good substitute for Countess M.

I went on to the lakes, and spent a day and a half on the lake of Como, and the same time on the Maggiore. The latter and the homeward journey across the Simplon remain my most beautiful impressions of Italy. The great works of Nature please me more than monuments. The valleys at the foot of the Alps on the Italian side are of an incomparable freshness, and the frame of snow mountains which surrounds them brings out their beauty in all its charm.

*To M. Cornélis de Witt.*

*Paris, May 17, 1864.*

MY DEAR CORNÉLIS,—I am home from Italy just in time to receive the little lesson in tolerance which the



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Bishop of Orleans and his friends have been so kind as to give me.<sup>1</sup> From that incident I have merely kept much gratitude towards M. Guizot; my candidatures usually bring similar results; please tell him so from me,

You naturally understand that if moral theories had been in question I should not have competed; but, in M. Bordin's own words, the prize was solely and expressly reserved to that work which presented "the most extensive knowledge and the greatest merit in style." This being so, I felt that, having read the vastest literature in Europe, spent seven years over it and written a book which, I was told, was not dull, I had some excuse for competing for the prize.

As to the sentences which you blame, my dear fellow, just consider one thing: do you believe that any one would take the line that I do without being fully persuaded of the truth of his ideas? A hundred times no; it were better to be a banker's clerk or a grocer; at least one would earn money, one would have a house, a family, a fresh complexion, and the pleasure of a peaceful digestion after meals. We have but one compensation, which is the intimate conviction that we have come upon some very wide, very powerful general idea, which between now and the next century will govern a whole province of human knowledge and studies. Otherwise it would be absolutely foolish to judge of Shakespeare for the hundredth time, or to hunt out illustrious unknowns like Barrow or Sidney, in order to disinter them and stand them in rows. We live, we work, we endure, only because of our philosophical idea, which constitutes our sole worth.

<sup>1</sup> The refusal of the Bordin prize.

Now, my philosophical idea is this : that all the feelings, ideas, and conditions of the human soul are products, each with its causes and its laws, and that the whole future of History consists in the research of those causes and laws. The assimilation of historical and psychological research to physiological and chemical research,—such is my object and master-idea ; I admit that the two classes of facts differ in order and in dignity, but, as to the mode of generation, I have spent ten years in proving the resemblance. I give you my word that never, in writing, have I dreamt of occasioning scandal ; I have always sought the most precise, most accurate expression, the formula in short ; I have never attempted anything else, and I believe that the right and the duty of a writer is—cost what it may—when he has thought it out, to express his thought with all the precision, all the strength possible, without pausing to consider any compromise.

I found Mme. de Witt's little letter on my return ; I thank her for it, and will profit by her remarks.

I spent three months in Italy, seeing and questioning as much as possible, and am now completing my tour by reading ; perhaps I can do something with these materials. This work will keep me in Paris for the whole of June, and, this summer at least, I shall not have the pleasure of coming to see you. Besides, I have promised the fourth volume of the *Littérature Anglaise*, and my examinations begin on July 1. Shall I keep this post ? At the first relapse of clerical fever, the next book I write, or the next change in the Cabinet, I may not be appointed again. I am quite prepared for that.

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*To his Mother:*

*Lagny, May 20, 1864.*

My Academical fiasco was a party stroke. The clericals were furious because they failed to get M. Autran, one of their friends, elected to the last vacancy; they seized upon my book as an opportunity for revenge. The Commission's report was unanimously favourable; they made things drag, assembled all their partisans and took advantage of a day when five of mine were absent. They had thirteen votes against eleven. The prize is postponed until next year, and will be 6,000 francs. But I do not think I can go in for it again. M. Guizot and M. Villemain spoke very well in my favour. Mgr. Dupanloup, M. Cousin, M. Berryer and M. Dupin spoke against me, and three of them owned that they had not read the book. It is a pity because of the money; but as far as reputation goes, or the sale of the book, it is not regrettable; the newspapers have spoken of the matter, and it is an advertisement. Hachette and Germer Baillière are much pleased with their sale, and M. Templier offers to print the fourth volume at once.

My poor Marcelin is worn out; he is overworking himself; he has headaches, and sits up too late; I am seriously anxious about him; he is killing himself; his mother is much troubled. Yet their business is going very well; subscribers are increasing in number; advertisements, fame and success follow. If only he does not become ill, like Woepke, just as he is reaching the goal! I do not know what to say to him; he is disturbed all day by business callers; he has to be a tradesman as well as

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a newspaper editor. It is only about midnight, when he comes in, that he can feel like an artist, and he naturally cannot resist the desire to take a note or make a drawing of his ideas. And late hours are so fatal !

*To Sainte Beuve.*

*Paris, Monday evening, May 30, 1864.*

I heard of your article this evening at the theatre. I have just been reading it, and I want to thank you at once, —without waiting until to-morrow—to thank you most heartily.

Your literary objections are well founded, I think, and I must try to improve.

As to your fundamental objection, I think there is a misunderstanding. I never had the intention of deducing the *individual*, of demonstrating that a Shakespeare or a Swift must appear at such a time and in such a place. That is well for people who admit an ingenious Providence, a heavenly Sower, who, from kindness and calculation, deposits a seed in a hole dug on purpose. I suppose that in every epoch there is approximately the same number of highly endowed children as of rickety or consumptive ones. Given this, chance operates ; it is probable that two or three Shakespeares and two or three Swifts have died of smallpox or infantile diarrhœa. Two or three others may have been enrolled in the fleet and killed in the war, etc. Chance might very well have happened to suppress that Shakespeare and that Swift who lived.

My thesis is simply this, that the temperature of the surroundings varies. Thus, at certain times, the temperature being bad, twenty-five cases of consumption out of thirty

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will reach the complete development of the disease. At another time, the air being milder, tubercles will develop in fifteen of them only.

It is the same thing with races : one race may offer two cases of consumption per hundred, whilst another may have eight.

Again, as to time : certain moments of an epoch can be compared to certain climacteric periods of the human life. For instance, tubercles are more likely to develop at eighteen than at fifty.

Instead of tubercles, say great men, great minds, of this or that kind, and I see no further difficulty.

Now, what is the tubercle, or the great man ? Shall we say that analysis is powerless to separate his component parts ? I have attempted to answer this in the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*. Yes, analysis is powerless if we wish to represent, completely and in all its shades, the absolutely special, personal, infinitely complex and variable impression which constitutes a human character. But note that this difficulty is to be met with everywhere, in an animal, a plant or a shell. Art itself, the most minutely executed painting, a portrait by (Clouet ?), only gives an approximate result. No ; analysis is not powerless if we merely seek to note the great characteristics which classify an individual with his genus and his species, if we mark the generating and regulating forces of his action, and if we indicate the degree of these forces.

I have attempted to paint individuals in my book, Bunyan, Shakespeare, Byron, Fielding. They are none the less individual for belonging to a class,—that class being composed of individuals. They are none the less

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spontaneous for being regulated by general laws,—those laws are only applied through individuals.

You see that I am arguing with you ; it is because I know that you approve of discussion, and that you bear with and accept it.

One more rectification, one of facts : you make me out more learned than I am. I have hardly done any mathematics, I have only just touched on analysis. I understand the principle and the work of it, that is all. My studies have been almost entirely concentrated around, above and below Psychology.

Good-bye, till to-morrow, dear master.

*To M. Cornélis de Witt.*

*Paris, June 27, 1864.*

MY DEAR CORNÉLIS,—I have been four or five times to the *Débats* office without finding John Lemoigne there ; they tell me that he only comes two or three times a year: You had better write to him.

I thought of offering to take his place ; but my examinations are just beginning, and I have to sit at them from eight o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night. Besides, it would be treating of a subject which I have already threshed out. My third volume is on the same subject as yours.

I have read your book,<sup>1</sup> and several things in it gave me keen pleasure ; for instance, the grave irony with which you speak of d'Argenson. As to the subject-matter, you know that we differ ; it is not only to free Government that I attribute the improvement in English morals in the

<sup>1</sup> *La Société Française et la Société Anglaise au XVIIIème Siècle.*

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eighteenth century, but to a conglomeration of causes, particularly the national character and the national religion. Again, as to the debasement of French morals ; I could in that respect quote the example of ancient Rome : it was not ruined merely because of the loss of Liberty, but on account of an *ensemble* of causes, primarily the conquering spirit and the destruction of the middle class. The ruin of freedom and the corruption of morals are two effects of the same cause, and not one the cause of the other.

One might also argue with you about Voltaire ; he is malicious, imprudent, perverse ; he presents the excess and violence of a nervous temperament ; he often is like a perverse monkey. But he was kind, and not in words only. See his establishments at Ferney ; they remind one of a great, humanitarian, English lord, doing good around him quite gratuitously. Diderot too did many generous actions ; they were enthusiastic scamps, but practical generosity was not found lacking in '89.

As to form, you seem to be acquiring more of it every day. This is quite solid and compact. You might have done better, however, to place the whole of France on one side, and the whole of England on the other, in virtue of the principle which tells us to group things in masses ; the impression would have been clearer.

Will you do me a favour ? Tell me the name of the London publisher who has M. Guizot's works translated, and the name of the translator. I must have my big book translated. I have no time to go to England just now, and I only have a very slight acquaintance with Mr. Murray. I shall be obliged to write. By my contract with Hachette, I must undertake this alone. Things have gone very well

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in France ; this edition is almost sold out ; there have been a great many criticisms. The *Westminster Review* published a long analysis with the kindest conclusions. The fourth volume (*les Contemporains*) is going to press.

I brought a great many notes home from Italy. I shall write a half-descriptive, half-historical, account of my journey.

*To M. Cornélis de Witt.*

*Paris, July, 1864.*

MY DEAR CORNÉLIS,—Many thanks for your present and future intervention with Mr. Reeves ; failing a translation, a review will be very useful.

Émile Boutmy will write in the *Presse* an article on M. Guizot's book (*Méditations sur l'état actuel de la Religion Chrétienne*). I suppose you have not forgotten M. Levallois, of the *Opinion Nationale*.

I have just finished reading the book ; you will not be surprised if I keep to the opinion which I already had. The fundamental argument which was already to be found in *l'Eglise et l'État* does not seem to me to be sufficient. To say, as M. Guizot does, that Man was suddenly created, quite complete, truly miraculously, is, in my opinion, to contradict every analogy, and, in positive sciences, we can only proceed by analogy. The first man's body was, I imagine, composed, like ours, of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, etc. : : : It must be admitted that the elements were to be found in the ambient atmosphere, unless we maintain that they were suddenly superadded to matter or dropped from above in a bell. Let us then imagine the event, as it must have taken place. It is necessary to



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suppose that, as by the stroke of a magic wand, those divers elements met, combined in the right proportions, forming tissues, organs, etc., properly balanced and constructed! To imagine a world like ours, or analogous to ours, with plants, animals, and everything that is required for the food of Man, with rivers, an atmosphere, etc. . . . and to believe that such a transformation, such a production, could take place in such a world, is absolutely unheard of. Such a conception becomes incredible as soon as one has seen the steam of a retort or the dissection of a limb. There are no laws in Nature if such an upheaval of laws ever took place. Here, as elsewhere, there have been transitions, preparations and progress; and here intervenes Lyell's and Darwin's explanation, founded on the immeasurable length and prodigious duration of geological periods, on the thousands of billions of centuries now proved by modern study of the earth's crust.

Again, as to the persistence of species, I believe that M. Guizot only consulted one group of advocates. M. Flourens is such a poor creature, and thought so little of in the world of Science, that specialists only laugh at him. Eminent naturalists nowadays only consider classifications and species as products, and not as primary data. I will only quote on this question two memoirs by M. Broca, one of the founders of the Anthropological Society: (1) *Rapport à la Société de Biologie sur les animaux ressuscitants*, and therefore on the nature of Life; and (2) *Mémoire sur l'hybridité*. Among other refutations of the radical separation of species, we find this fact: an Angouleme speculator has been manufacturing for several years a product of a hare and a rabbit, three quarters hare and

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one quarter rabbit, which can be reproduced indefinitely, though the hare and the rabbit are quite different genera, far more so than a wolf and a fox, or a horse and a donkey. In short, modern ideas come from a great whole of physiological and zoological researches, which the refutations in the book do not seem to touch. I need not beg pardon for these objections ; I know that you and M. Guizot are frankly and thoroughly liberal, and that you accept contradiction.

*To M. Gabriel Monod.<sup>1</sup>*

*Toulouse, August 30, 1864.*

Your letter, Sir, has followed me on my examination tour ; I only received it yesterday, and that is why I am answering it somewhat late.

The confidence which you place in me honours me much, and makes it all the more embarrassing for me to answer. I have not the honour of knowing your family ; I know nothing of your situation and your character, and those are data of the first order in a deliberation. Outside the question of Science and Education, there is the question of means and of a future. The short cut which you wish to take is very much harder ; it is probable that, on your return, you will find yourself a suspected man in the University ; a historian cannot live by his pen. Almost always, he has to make a luxury of Science and Literature, and find his means of subsistence elsewhere.

I am, therefore, taking your question quite in the abstract ; it is simply this : given a clever, learned man,

<sup>1</sup> M. Gabriel Monod, member of the *Institut*, b. 1844, was at that time finishing his second year at the *École Normale*.

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armed with the best possible French education, will this same man do well to go to Germany to finish his education ? I answer, yes, unhesitatingly.

Most of the great historical studies in our times have their source and their centre in Germany. This is indisputable for Sanskrit and Persian studies, for Biblical exegesis, and for Latin and Greek History and Philology. It is less true for Modern History ; each nation, such as England and France, has its original historians. Nevertheless, even in that foreign province, in the history of Italy, of Provence or Spain, Germans do as well as natives.

Their superiority in History is due to two causes. In the first place, they are philologists ; they go straight to the texts ; they read manuscripts and unpublished documents ; they come to Paris, to Oxford, to Dublin, in order to compare different readings ; they study at first hand. The defect of University education is that it imparts second-hand knowledge, through manuals, epitomes, lectures, and ready-made editions. Before everything else, a writer, an historian, should stand face to face, and without an intermediary, with monuments and documents such as they are, rough and mutilated, previously to any rectification or restoration.

In the second place, they are philosophers. Almost all of them have attended, while at the University, or since then, one or two courses of lectures on Philosophy, so that they have acquired the habit of generalizing and of seeing objects in masses. Thence their ideas on the *ensemble* and development of a whole civilization ; and, as you know in the very ancient and dateless times, such as Hebraic

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and Hindoo Antiquity, it is by such considerations only that documents can be classified and dated.

On your return you will find in France something which is lacking in Germany. You should see artists, painters, travellers, men of fashion, and especially novelists, observers like Flaubert and Sainte Beuve. They alone, far better than Gervinus or Loessen, will teach you to know the individual, the real and living person, and to set him in motion.

Such, Sir, is the best historical culture, in my opinion: To make an effort to acquire it is a noble and perilous undertaking. One of your schoolfellows, M. Michel Bréal, has just succeeded in doing so ; he can give you more information on these matters than I can. However it may be, the whole responsibility of the decision must rest with yourself, who alone know your strength, your resources, your difficulties, and everything else. Allow me to assure you of my keen sympathy and best wishes for the future.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, June 8, 1865.*

DEAR OLD ÉDOUARD,—Every week for the last six months I have been intending to scold you for your laziness. Paris is absorbing, but your quiet life at Aix should give you some leisure for writing to me. At last, for lack of time to write a letter, I was going to send you the following warning in the shape of a dedication of my little book *Philosophie de l'Art*, which Germer Baillière is about to publish: *To my friend Édouard de Suckau, author of a Study on Schopenhauer.*

Joking apart, why do you not finish that book ? it would

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be worth a thousand francs to you, from Germer Bailliére as well as from some Review ; the subject is interesting and actual. You have done the same thing as that scamp of a Ponsot, who was to have written a little book on Hamilton. He did not do so ; he wasted his time giving lessons, and now Stuart Mill has just published a volume of criticism on Hamilton, admirable in its penetration, justness, abundance and concatenation of ideas. There is a new budding philosophy in England at present, with Stuart Mill, his father James Mill, Herbert Spencer and Bain (*The Emotions and the Will ; The Senses and the Intellect*). Practically it is Kant over again, but with the acquisitions and incrustations of Experience instead of the *a priori* categories and forms of the Intellect.

I calculate that we shall be at Marseilles about the end of August or the beginning of September. You will come and see me, will you not ? and we will again dine at the *Réserve*. Did you recognize the evening we spent together by the sea at the beginning of my *Voyage en Italie* ?

I have one more volume to write on Italy ; I have done Naples and Rome, and there remain Florence and Venice, and the ten or twelve intermediate towns. I shall try and write it when I return from my examination tour. But at present I am too busy ; my lectures occupy three whole months and my examinations more than three months. In the interval between the two I am somewhat tired, and, besides, it is too short for me to undertake anything important. Immediately after my second volume on Italy, I want to begin my work on Philosophy, and I shall require much time and all my strength: I shall have to give up one of my two posts, and St.

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Cyr, the only lucrative one, will be intolerable next year with the new Duruy programme.

Now you have a lot of details about me, and you hardly give me any concerning yourself, the subject of your lectures, the reasons which prevented you from finishing *Schopenhauer*, your readings, your life, etc. Take your courage in both hands and write to me!!

*To Sainte Beuve.*

*La Flèche, August 14, 1865.*

MY DEAR MASTER,—M. Charles Robin, the anatomist, fancies that he needs a letter from me as an introduction to you, as if he needed an introduction from any one to any one, as if everybody, and you first of all, were not aware of his great micrographical works and particularly of his original method and the scope of his biological views. We all acknowledge physiologists and anatomists for our masters, and moral criticism takes physical criticism for a starting-point; nobody is a greater proof of this than you, who were a medical student.

If you will glance at M. Robin's course of lectures, published this year in Germer Baillière's periodical, you will see that there lies the source to which a historian of the soul must come when seeking rational investigation and methodical classification. Like Claude Bernard, he goes beyond his own speciality and it is only through such specialists that our unfortunate philosophy will enter into a new and productive era. He desires a public, official sanction to his labours; in fact, he wishes to enter the Académie des Sciences. MM. Milne-Edwards and de Quatrefages look upon him as too like M. Littré in his

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opinions, and are supporting M. Lacaze, a man of their own persuasion. They say that M. Robin is a Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, and that he will be elected at the next vacancy in the Medical Section, forgetting that he has worked all his life at anatomy and general physiology. Claude Bernard and Joseph Bertrand are championing him, and will perhaps ascertain whether the Princess (Mathilde) would condescend to use her influence in the Academy elections. You are better situated than any one to judge of what is opportune and possible. But this is again one of those test-cases which wound us to the quick. A man who is great in his own speciality, an anatomist who is to anatomy what Littré is to philology, is attacked because he carries philosophical views into his science and because he has not discovered the little monad called a Soul in some corner of the grey substance ! Who shall deliver us from the Epigoni, sons of Epigoni, who sanctify the Sorbonne, the Collège de France and Society in general ! I hope it may be you ; to that effect, please take care of yourself and keep for me, on my return, the smile which we are accustomed to look for at the Magny dinners.

*To Édouard de Suckau.*

*Paris, November 27, 1865.*

Since you left me I have been working extremely hard, and have now finished my second article, which is still too long, though I have curtailed several passages. Florence is a world ; what you can see there in a fortnight is surprising. I will now prepare my lectures, finish the *Grain-dorge* article (for the *Vie Parisienne*) of which you saw the beginning, and write another article on a little known

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novelist of great merit, Hector Malot, who has so much talent that I am anxious to serve him if I can, though I do not know him personally.

Prévost, whom I have seen, looks most flourishing; About is in Paris; I shall try to have him to lunch or dinner. Renan will publish his *Apôtres* on the 15th December.

Read in the *Revue Contemporaine* a series of articles by Sainte Beuve on Proudhon—most interesting, with many unpublished letters, etc. Sainte Beuve has written nothing better.

I have found a most amiable and learned German doctor, who is translating my *Philosophy of Art*; it has just been published in English.<sup>1</sup> My first volume on Italy is being printed, and will come out about the 15th January.

That is all my news, dear friend. I should like to be at hand and able to run in and see you and hear your news; do not leave me too long without any. Do write a little oftener, if it does not tire you. If you can take up your *Schopenhauer* again without too much effort, tell me about it and the plan of your work. I shall read Schopenhauer on purpose to answer you. One thought makes me glad for you, it is the azure sea and sky which you enjoy in winter, whilst we are splashing about in the mud under the rain.

To Édouard de Suckau.,

Paris, April 22, 1866.

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—Yesterday I finished my second volume on Italy, and I am writing to you for news. Now that winter is over, how does spring find you? Do you

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Mr John Durand.



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find your weekly lecture fatiguing? How do you feel on the whole? Have you any plans for this summer?—some stay at the sea-side, where the heat may not be too overpowering? There is a lacuna concerning you in my head, and, I may say, without exaggeration, in another part of me as well. Try and find an hour to fill it.

I have worked a great deal this winter. I have written a volume of six hundred pages, which is coming out in the *Revue* and will be published in November. I am just beginning a little book, entitled *Philosophie de l'Art en Italie* for Germer Bailliére. But I am weary, and have not much heart for work; yet one must work or eat one's heart out; the spleen is always on my doorstep, and, though I try to send it away or strangle it, it often comes straight in. Reasoning is of no use against it; it is a part of my constitution, and goes back to the *École*; as a matter of fact, the cause of it is that my machinery is weaker than my will. I absorb myself in occupation as much as possible; my lectures have been taking up a great deal of my time, and though I have dropped many acquaintances in order to avoid late hours, I am still obliged to go out in the evening once or twice a week.

About has been in Paris for the last three months; he has theatricals in his house, attends to everything, and is most flourishing. Have you read his *Turco* in the last numbers of the *Revue*? it is charming, one of the best things he has done.

You saw in the *Débats*, a week ago, an article by Prévost on "The Scientific Spirit imported into Letters." He has every right to refute me in the *Débats*. But this article was read a few days before (in a public sitting of the Académie)

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as a sort of official maiden-speech ; a singular proceeding, I think. I am so clearly indicated that every one recognized me. Is it in order publicly to renounce Satan, his pomps and his works ? It was not a friendly thing to do . . .

: : . We have not yet been re-appointed at Saint-Cyr, but I shall probably keep my post for one more year. I shall spend my two remaining months at Fontainebleau breathing fresh air, and looking at trees, whilst learning the programme of contemporary History, which is as agreeable to the taste, as soothing and as useful as castor-oil.

Dear Ed., this letter is like a Paris news paragraph ! We are reaching the age when dissertations give way to gazettes. I was thirty-eight yesterday, my dear fellow ; let me shake hands with your thirty-eighth year and let us embrace as contemporaries. But, please send me news of yourself.

Thine.

## CHAPTER VI

1867-1869

*L'Intelligence*—Lectures at the École des Beaux Arts—*De l'Idéal dans l'Art*—*Notes sur Paris*—*Philosophie de l'Art dans les Pays Bas*—Various Writings—H. Taine's Marriage—*Philosophie de l'Art en Grèce*. Travels in Bavaria, Tyrol and Italy—Divers Articles—Publication of *l'Intelligence*—Correspondence

At the beginning of 1867, H. Taine was nearly thirty-nine years old, and in the prime of his strength and talent ; his philosophical ideas had been ripening for twenty years, and in numerous sketches, constantly touched up, he had planned out the great work to which he was now about to give himself up wholly. He entered with joy into this work of predilection. We have seen by what deep studies he had prepared himself for it from his earliest youth ; his visits to England and his articles on Stuart Mill had brought him into contact with the contemporary English School ; he was steadily and continuously observing the philoso-

phical and scientific movement abroad, in Germany especially ; and lastly, he frequented the *élite* of the French scientific world : physiologists like Vulpian, Claude Bernard, Robin, Verneuil, Broca, Paul Bert ; specialists in lunacy like Baillarger, Cerise, Luys ; mathematicians like Joseph Bertrand, Fizeau, Cournot ; philologists like Renan, Bréal, Mohl, Gaston Paris ; and finally, such *savants* as Berthelot and Maury—closely following their observations and the results of their experiments in view of the work he was meditating. A list of his readings at that time will be found in the notes to *l'Intelligence*.

He had abandoned the titles of his first philosophical works : *Traité des Sensations*, and *Traité de la Connaissance*, and returned to the name he had adopted at the École Normale for the original sketch of his work, *Théorie de l'Intelligence*, which, still further simplified, ultimately became *De l'Intelligence*.

In spite of all these preparations, the work which remained to be done was immense ; Taine pursued it continuously during three whole years, with only short interruptions, necessitated by his lectures at the École des Beaux Arts, where, throughout the winter of 1867, he dealt with painting in Italy, and especially the Venetian school. He published shortly afterwards his lecture on Titian and two others on the *Ideal in Art*, which formed the small volume published under that title a few months later.

He also wrote during that year, articles on Paul de Saint Victor (*Hommes et Dieux, Études d'Histoire et de Littérature*), Camille Selden (*Mendelssohn et la Musique Allemande*), *l'École des Beaux Arts*, and *Quelques Ouvrages de Philosophie récente*, most of which were included later in the *Derniers*

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*Essais de Critique et d'Histoire* ; and lastly, two prefaces, one for the *Notes sur Paris*, which had come out by instalments in the *Vie Parisienne* under the pseudonym *Frédéric Thomas Graindorge*, and which were now being published in a volume under his own name, and another for M. de Montagnac's *Ardennes Illustrées*.

As the syllabus for his 1868 lectures comprised a study of painting in the Netherlands, Taine thought it useful to visit again the Museums in Belgium and Holland, and to revive the memories of his visit in 1858 ; he therefore went there again for a few weeks in October.

During the preceding spring, he had made a short tour in Eastern France and stayed for a few days at the convent of Sainte Odile, in Alsace ; his eyes were still dazzled by this admirable landscape when he wrote, at the beginning of the following year, his article on *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

He epitomized his 1868 lectures in one small volume on *La Philosophie de l'Art dans les Pays Bas*, which appeared in October. As in preceding years, he had previously extracted from it two lectures on the History of Painting in the Netherlands, and on the Epochs in Painting in the Netherlands.

Ever since 1854, M. Taine had lived in Paris with his mother ; his sedentary tastes made the regularity and intimacy of his home most necessary to him ; and Madame Taine, foreseeing that she would one day be taken from him, had often urged him to marry. But the young philosopher's health had for several years remained in a precarious state, and afterwards, absorption in his work and the fear of bringing a painful perturbation into the life of his devoted mother had kept him from serious thoughts of matrimony.

However, he met in 1868, at the house of Henri Lehmann, the painter, the daughter of M. Alexandre Denuelle, an artist and an intimate friend of his host ; he married her a few months later, on June 8. These new ties made no change in his laborious existence, and he eagerly continued his work on *l'Intelligence*, the first volume of which only was finished.

The 1869 lectures at the École des Beaux-Arts, the last of the five years' period which he had assigned to himself when making out the plan of his Æsthetic classes, had "Art in Greece" for their subject. A few of them, remodelled and rewritten, first appeared in the *Journal des Débats*, and afterwards (in December) in one short volume dedicated to Henri Lehmann. In the course of the same year he published a few more articles and criticisms, chiefly in the *Journal des Débats* : *Récit inédit de la Mort de Voltaire*, *L'Esprit Moderne en Allemagne*, by Camille Selden, Stuart Mill's *Hamilton's Philosophy*, Paul de Saint Victor's *Femmes de Goethe*, and an obituary note on Sainte Beuve whose death caused him deep sorrow. He felt a respectful affection for him, together with a deep gratitude for the kindness which the great critic had shown him at the beginning of his literary career. He admired his penetrating mind and supple talent, and the *Causeries du Lundi* were to him a perpetual source of enjoyment and relaxation. In the last days of his life, when disease debarred him from any personal work and any effort at concentration, he still delighted in hearing them read to him.

In August, 1869, Taine went to Munich by way of Basle and the Lake of Constance, and spent several days taking notes in the old *Pinacothek*. After an excursion to the

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Königsee, Salzburg, and Innsbruck, he went into Italy by the Brenner, made a short stay on the Lake of Garda and at Milan, then visited the Certosa of Pavia, Genoa and Turin, which had had no place in his 1864 itinerary.

The notes taken on this journey were never utilized, save for some École des Beaux-Arts lectures subsequent to the war.

At the beginning of 1870, Taine signed with Renan a letter to the *Journal des Débats* in favour of a subscription towards raising a statue to Hegel in Germany. Here, as in the case of Sainte Beuve, he was discharging a debt of gratitude towards the man who had for several years so deeply stimulated his intellect. He published about the same time two short articles on the *Philosophie de l'Architecture en Grèce*, by M. Émile Boutmy, and on M. Th. Ribot's *Psychologie Anglaise Contemporaine*.

At last, in April 1870, Messrs. Hachette published the first edition of *L'Intelligence*; it was a source of deep joy to Taine that he had successfully carried out that which he considered as the centre of his whole work, the thought of which had been paramount during the whole of his intellectual life, and to which he had given himself up with such complete disinterestedness. "The book will have one hundred readers in France, and perhaps as many again in the rest of Europe," he said. His perspicacity was at fault this time. *L'Intelligence* has had thousands of readers, and its success seems to be still increasing now that new generations, more imbued than their predecessors with M. Taine's methods, wish to penetrate to the very source of his philosophical conceptions.

The third (1878) and the fourth (1883) editions of the

work were successively modified by the author, testifying to his constant solicitude for his philosophical work.

*To M. Ecoffey (Swiss Consul at Naples).*

*Paris, January 2, 1867.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your kind remembrance and beg you will accept, for yourself and Mme. Ecoffey, many good wishes from my mother and myself. We are having very bad weather, rain and snow. How delightful to see the sea and the Villa Reale! . . . Every one is not as fortunate as you are.

As to the page of which you approve concerning the advantages of Republican Institutions, I much fear that we are daily getting further away from that régime. Our modern States are too large and are unavoidably becoming more and more subject to regulations. Your municipalities and provincial differences still, to a certain extent, serve as counterweights; we have none left in France, and those who wish to re-discover the Individual forget that, here, all is reduced to dust. Beyond the officialdom we have now no elements of association or organization. In my opinion, our rôle is over, at least temporarily; the future belongs to Prussia, the United States and England. We have done what your sixteenth century Italians did; we have gone forward, far beyond the others, in a higher direction; we have held the first rank in Europe; we proclaimed and applied equality as you proclaimed and manifested highly intellectual life and beautiful social life at the time of the Renaissance. It is a pure and generous wine, but we drank too much of ours, as you did of yours, and we are now fallen; retarded as you have been, whilst



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our neighbours, who watered their wine, have kept their balance and are now passing us on the road as they passed you.

*To M. Paul de Saint Victor.*

*Paris, March 23, 1867.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You are a magnificent Italian of the Renaissance, welcoming a new comer to your palace; I am a man of the North, from the land of mud and oak-trees, and I can but thank you again and again. All I can promise you in exchange is that I am learning, and shall yet learn a great deal. When I was a boy, with twenty sous a week for pocket-money, I used to save ten in order to buy an old engraving (they were cheap in those days), and I forgot my saddest hours in looking at my collection. I am taking notes of your criticisms, and shall ask you for more details. In the meanwhile, I beg to draw your attention to the fact that, towards the end, I went back a little from my admiration of Tintoretto; at the last page I recognized that I had been dazzled by the sunshine. As to Benozzo Gozzoli, I brought home four pages of notes concerning him, but he had to be crowded out, like many other things. My book should be entitled, *The Travels of a Historian in the World of Painting*. I am nothing more, and shall never aspire to Art Criticism; it would require a painter's education; I had not even half that, and, since for the last three years I have been studying original drawings, Vasari, and contemporary writings, I have become more and more persuaded that the mould into which the thoughts of a Renaissance painter or sculptor flowed is different from ours. They thought in

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coloured shapes, whilst we think in abstract words: That is why, in my opinion, it is necessary to have done some painting, drawing and modelling—or at least to possess, as you and Gautier do, the inner mould itself in order to judge of them in detail and piece by piece.

Their works and the Grecian statues produced on me the effect of a distinct race, absolutely living and comparable to the real races I have seen—French, English, German, or Italian. I experienced a physiological and psychological sensation which I attempted to render in the words of my trade.

Again, thank you. Allow me to press your kind and loyal hand.

*To M. Ecoffey.*

*Paris, May 7, 1867.*

MY DEAR MONSIEUR ECOFFEY,—My cousin brought me yesterday the orange grown in your garden, and I made her describe your little garden and your terrace. It should be very warm in Naples, for it is stifling in Paris, but it must make up for everything to be able to look at the sea in the evening when the sun sets.

Many people here believe that war will take place; however I do not, at least for this year. General opinion has calmed down, irritation has lessened, and you know how great is the power of good sense and personal interests when they are allowed time to speak. The peasants have become much richer in the last twenty years, they have acquired land, paid off almost all their mortgages and bought a few railway shares. They are contracting certain middle-class ideas, indulging in some comforts,

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limiting the number of their children, thinking of the future, and beginning to read the paper. A mass of this kind is far more difficult to set in motion and to impel to self-sacrifice than it would have been sixty years ago. I believe that events will follow more and more the course they follow in England, where politicians, diplomats, and statesmen are led by general opinion instead of leading it. There is no room now for a Pitt and an enterprising, calculating aristocracy. People wish for peace, trade, labour, personal and temporary comfort, and resist more and more energetically the reasonings which, in a Sovereign's mind, would cause the death of a hundred thousand men for the benefit of future generations, and the maintenance of a pre-eminence.

The impression which reaches me of your Italian affairs is not a good one. Some time will be required before you can accept the vexations to which a modern independent people has to submit ; if I am not mistaken, all travellers' tales and observations converge towards the same conclusion. In order to pay a great national and regular Government, the nation will have to work a great deal, and each man will have to constrain himself, to shut himself up in an office, work in his own sphere, study new methods, practise improvements, and deprive himself of idleness, feasting, love, dancing and dreaming. Besides this, State officials will have to be honest, zealous, well disciplined and obedient. It is all very contrary to your traditions and habits in the last three centuries, and nothing is more difficult than to modify habits which may have degenerated into instincts. My friends agree in saying that your Revolution is at present reduced to two things :

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heavier taxes for all, and the pleasure of talking politics for those who possess an evening suit. Is that true? put me right if I am mistaken.

Accept again, dear Sir, my best thanks for your many kindnesses, and present to Madame Ecoffey my respectful remembrances.

*To his Mother.*

*Sainte Odile, May 24, 1867.*

I have been in the convent for an hour, and am quite comfortable. I had two absolutely new-laid eggs and a cup of excellent milk for my breakfast, served by the nuns. The ink alone, as you see, is not all I could wish. My window looks out on two mountains on the right, and, on the left, on thirty leagues of plain. It is rather cold, on account of the wind and the altitude, but there is a good stove in my room, which is going to be lighted. I expect Emile Boutmy to-morrow, and to-night I shall dine alone with the nuns, being the only guest. All this is comical: you must repeat it to people who call me a miscreant. I have already had a long conversation with the Mother Superior, and we are on the best of terms.

The mountains, and especially the pine-trees with their green-tipped branches, have done me a great deal of good. The old enchantment, the sensation of blissful and bountiful Nature came back to me this morning. Many things contribute to it in this country. I slept at Obernay, a patriarchal, old-fashioned, little town of about 5,000 inhabitants; in the evening, and at breakfast, I talked with the daughter of the house, not a beauty, but a perfectly virtuous, gentle and sensible girl; peaceful homes of this kind inspire

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one with peaceful thoughts. No pretensions, no ambition ; the stranger is served kindly and attentively, with no flattery or lying ; no affectation, coquetry, or desire to be taken for a lady. : : .

*To his Mother.*

*Sainte Odile, May 29, 1867.*

: : . I hope to stay here until Saturday. I am most comfortable, and on excellent terms with the sisters and their Confessor ; they ply me with good things and I talk German with them, telling them of my journey to Monte Cassino and of the legends about St. Francis. They are Franciscans, very good, very kind and not narrowly bigoted. The Abbé lends me books out of the library ; I walk three or four leagues a day in the mountains ; I see pine-trees one hundred and fifty years old, ancient ruined castles invaded by trees and ivy ; I look at the rocks, which are of a most curious geological formation (the whole of the Rhine valley was an enormous glacier, rolling and piling up blocks on the heights). Before my window lie thirty leagues of country, the Rhine in the middle, appearing but a finger's breadth, the Black Forest mountains on the horizon. The sun rises at four a.m. opposite my window. It only rained one day, and I went out, nevertheless, with an umbrella. To-day the sky is glorious, a very summer feast.

Edouard has written to me ; here is his letter : Poor fellow, I fear the end is very near.<sup>1</sup>

Boutmy has not been able to come, so that I am all

<sup>1</sup> M. Edouard de Suckau died a few weeks later.

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alone ; but the country is so beautiful and the people so kindly, that I am not bored. Besides, it is a good thing to leave Paris now and then. It is the only means of seeing things as a whole and to judge of oneself fairly and reasonably.

*To Sainte Beuve.*

*Barbizon, June 15, 1867:*

MY DEAR "UNCLE,"—Thanks for your thanks.<sup>1</sup> I need not tell you that that dedication meant something more than a scientific debt. If I dabble in Moral Physiology, it is thanks to you ;—if, after many persecutions, I have met with much kindness in this life, it is also thanks to you.

Now for a very sincere question, which demands a no less sincere answer. Think about it, and, knowing me as you do, you will see that I am dealing frankly with you: You have, I hope, received a volume entitled *Vie et Opinions de M. Graindorge*. (1) Is it good, or bad ? (2) Was I right or wrong to publish it ?

Some friends whom I esteem, and who are clever, have passed on this book extreme and absolutely contradictory judgments, some for and some against it. I have not yet read any newspapers, all I know is that the whole edition is sold. I wrote it for two reasons : first, because my descriptions of the manners and customs of the courts of Elizabeth, Charles II of England, and Charles II of Spain were much praised, and I thought I would do better still with a world which I knew better, being an eye-witness ;

<sup>1</sup> Taine had dedicated to Sainte Beuve his little volume on the *Ideal in Art*.

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secondly, because I wished to try a new form, the expression of an immediate sensation, which cannot be done in the demonstrative and analytical style of my other books. As to the personage that I introduced, I copied him from a man I have known for a long time ; and I gave him Anglo-Saxon ideas because they were his, because they are those I know best, and because, by the force of contrast, they best show the characteristics of ours.

Now you must tell me whether I have done well ; it is clear that I can ask the question but of you only, and you do admit, do you not, that I am not fishing for compliments. Tell me what you think, without restrictions or attenuations.

I am with my mother at Barbizon, by the forest, and am writing my treatise on *l'Intelligence*. Condillac and Tracy knew more about it than Jouffroy. Everything has been vitiated by the anti-scientific school of Royer-Collard and M. Cousin. Fortunately, physiologists have been working ; amongst others, quite recently, Helmholtz, on sound and colour, and also the English philosophers, Herbert Spencer, Mill, and Bain. But complete concentration and very good health are required for such a work. I am anxious to go on with it because there lies the root of all my historical and moral ideas.

Yours cordially,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The envelope of this letter bears, in Sainte Beuve's hand, the following words :

H. TAINE,  
Gratias Maximas.  
Pro ope agit  
Victus fugatus que.

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*Sainte Beuve's Answer.*

June 16, 1867:

DEAR FRIEND,—You ask me to do a difficult thing, for it is always difficult to put oneself exactly in the place of another.

In fact, *Graindorge* will be criticised, and you will be blamed for writing it. It will be read, it will sell; but whatever you may do, criticism, which could not attack your great works, or which broke its teeth when attacking them, will bite at this one, which is more within its reach. If it were strategy, it would be wily strategy, for praise will accrue to your other books all the more.

As to the book itself, I am not a very good judge. I do not like the *Graindorge* disguise; it is no disguise at all, it is unpleasing in its crudity, and it is not in the least likely, for it is impossible that such a man should write a quantity of pretty, delicate things which ought simply to have been produced in your own name. If you have indeed known such a man as M. Graindorge, nothing was easier than to bring him in occasionally, but you should have kept the thread in your own hands.

This book of *Notes on Paris* has necessarily the disadvantages of everything that touches on contemporary matters. It is a perilous way of testing your theories, and I would beware of it if I were you. There are numberless ways of seeing men and things of the day; it cannot be done straight away. I have been but to very few middle-class balls, even in Paris, but I should not say that women showed "paws"; such crude expressions are objectionable, and the exquisite analytical talent which you so



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frequently display on the same page does not prevent it from seeming hard. Why be in such a hurry to translate impressions into written notes and these notes into laws? Besides, it is better that a man who is writing such things as the *History of English Literature*, the *History of Art*, the *Theory of the Ideal* and the history and analysis of the human *Intelligence* should seem so much absorbed by them as not to let himself be disturbed before the public by a class of subjects which is usually left to chroniclers. This constitutes a mistake in strategy which perhaps counterbalances the advantage I mentioned before.

You see that I am wavering and hesitating. After all, you have done neither right nor wrong; you have obeyed your own impulse in your own style. You have been in a hurry to reap your harvest, which is the modern tendency. You now consult a man of letters who is but a man of yesterday; what does About, the man of to-day, say about it? Does he approve or disapprove?

It is true that the great thinkers of yore did not stop before such considerations; conscious of their mental wealth, they poured it out unreservedly. Leibnitz wrote simultaneously on all sorts of subjects, and it has certainly not lessened him in our eyes.

On studying the book closely, a good deal is to be said for and against it. Forgive me for being such a poor adviser. I shall read over again many pages in which M. Graindorge is *de trop* and Tainé alone satisfies me.

Heartily yours,

SAINTE BEUVE.

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To Madame C. Coignet.

Paris, October 18, 1867.

SIR,<sup>1</sup>—I have just received the four articles which you have published in the *Morale Indépendante* on *l'Idéal dans l'Art*, and I thank you for the kindly and honorable way in which you treat this essay. Criticism of such a kind can but please, and I shall certainly profit by your observations. Allow me, however, to present briefly to you the objections which they suggest to me. Firstly, third article, p. 44: I am so far from denying psychological observation that I have for a year been writing a psychology of Intelligence; it will be my chief work; and I am so far from being a materialist that, in my eyes, the physical world is but an appearance, produced by the play of our exterior perception. Secondly, and this is essential, because moral events, ideas, passions, aptitudes, instincts and faculties form a world of their own, it does not follow that they are not subject to laws; their laws are as rigorous as those which control physical events; in other words, there are some precise conditions, the presence or absence of which determine the presence or absence of these laws. Concerning this, I beg you will read over Stuart Mill's admirable dissertation in his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's*

<sup>1</sup> Madame C. Coignet has been kind enough to extract from the *Memoires* destined to appear after her death this letter and the two others to be found on pp. 289 and 294 written to her by M. Taine in answer to a criticism of some of his works in the *Morale Indépendante*. As the first appearance of the paper created some sensation, Mme. Coignet, in order not to attract attention by posing as a woman philosopher, veiled her sex under the simple signature of C. Coignet. M. Taine was deceived by it, and likewise M. E. Caro and M. Th. Ribot, some of whose works she also analyzed.

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*Philosophy.* Thirdly, I could not write a moral essay *à propos* of the Ideal in Art. I only indicate what are the reasons why certain moral qualities seem to us beautiful.

I wished to explain why there is some beauty in an evil power such as that of Iago or Richard II ; I did not dream of justifying it.

The same answer applies to the fourth article, page 51: I am not required to give a criterium of vice and of virtue. I in no wise affirm that "the motive power is indifferent to the morality of the action." My only business is to point out, amongst motives or principles which move to actions expressed in works of art, those which are productive of good, and, therefore, beautiful. All ethical questions and difficulties are reserved ; it is not the part of *Æsthetics* but of a distinct science to seek how far kindness and abnegation should be carried, in what case the minority should be preferred to the majority, etc.

I therefore believe, Sir, that, where you see objections there are lacunæ, voluntary lacunæ, due to the subject of the book. Allow me to answer for my *Æsthetics* only ; the other science has so much scope that it should be treated by itself.

This letter is, of course, a personal one ; I do not ask you to insert it or to rectify anything, and my only object in writing it is to tell you that I am, perhaps, not so far from you as you think. The only point upon which I feel we differ fundamentally is the question of free-will. I think people are apt to be misled by words ; for my part I am absolutely a Determinist, and I found my opinion on psychological observation as well as upon physical experience. I can only refer you to Stuart Mill's *Logic*, and

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especially to his *Examination* ; it is a masterpiece of good sense, power and clearness.

I beg you will accept, Sir, the assurance of my devoted consideration.

*To Madame C. Coignet.*

*Antwerp, October 20, 1867.*

SIR,<sup>1</sup>—My mother, whom I have asked to open my letters in my absence, has sent me an extract of yours. That which I wrote to you was too obviously private to be inserted in a newspaper. I drew your attention to this fact towards the end. But if it seems to you interesting to mark the “position of the question,” let me tell you that I have elsewhere touched upon this point, namely, in the Preface to the second edition of the *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*. You will find there, after a complete exposition of my method, a refutation of the objections to which it may give rise. Amongst other things, I defend myself from the accusations of suppressing individuality and responsibility, and I attempt to show the principal error which prevails on this subject ; signs are taken for things, according to the scholastic custom, and the exact sense of words such as *law, force, person*, etc., is lost sight of.

Far from refusing to debate this point, I accept, most heartily ; and if it be agreeable to you to take it up after reading the admirable chapters of Mill, Herbert Spencer and Bain, I shall be happy to see the subject dealt with by an attentive and careful mind. Do not take my opinion for a new one ; the greater number of philosophers are Determinists : the Stoics, Spinoza, and Leibnitz to begin

<sup>1</sup> See note on page 287.

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with, and all the great modern Germans ; add men of an exquisite sense, such as Voltaire and Vauvenargues ; also the whole movement of modern science, English psychologists, statisticians and specialists in lunacy. The modern theory of forces and their equivalency goes in that direction, and, far from chaining man down to a fatalistic resignation, this theory increases his power and hopes, showing him the conditions of his transformation and of his action.

*To Mademoiselle D.*

*Orsay, May 22, 1868.*

You know how I spent last evening. Besides George Sand and Prince Napoleon, Renan was there and Marchal the painter ; Flaubert had been detained in Rouen. We talked of the modern and ancient Theatre, of this year's Exhibition (especially *à propos* of M. Lefèvre and his portrait ; it is that of his sister, and they say that he has taken a brother's liberties ; the original is prettier, and not very like the picture) ; also of the Académie des Inscriptions, and especially of general politics and clerical affairs. Here is a saying of George Sand's, generous and *naïve*, like everything she says or feels. We were comparing the stage with novels, and I was telling her that it seems to me that a novelist lowers himself when writing for the stage, because he has to delete his refinements, his delicate analysis, his *dessous*, and to submit to the exigencies of the footlights, of the stage, and of a chance public. "That is true," she said, "but I like the stage, because one works in company, and several of us unite to bear the same thoughts." You recognize her instincts of fraternity, of Socialism.

She also said to Renan, who is pessimistic concerning France and politics, "You know the past too well; in order to believe, to hope and to act, we must look chiefly at the future." She has retained the breath of youth and enthusiasm, together with a calm air and a great taste for silence. I own that I should have preferred to be alone with her and Renan; three is the right number for conversation; two is better still; then one can ask searching questions, look into the depths and drop all the veils of conventionality and politeness. . . .

Renan and Berthelot need, the one his laboratory, and the other his library, in order to work. They go up to Paris every morning at nine o'clock from their Sèvres country-house, and shut themselves up to work until six o'clock in the evening. As for me, I only need about sixty volumes; I keep them in a case, which I take about with me; that and a few short journeys to Paris to talk with specialists, or go to the libraries, supply me with all the materials I want. . . . I have to dig a road up a hard, irregular and steep incline; sometimes a day, a week, passes without any progress, when I come across a rock against which my tools get blunted. Yesterday, for instance, I only wrote half a page for the whole day. Very often, too, on account of the difficulty of the subject, I spend the morning walking round and round my room, arranging my ideas in my head, looking at the subject as a whole and choosing possible outlets; it is only after two or three hours that the choice and the light come. Yesterday, towards the afternoon, I found the conclusion of an essential chapter, a big idea, which, if it be a true one, will serve as a buttress to a great part of the edifice. But, to

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make up for it, I was tired out and good for nothing at four o'clock. I played the piano a little—very badly.

*To Mr. John Durand.<sup>1</sup>*

*Orsay, August 15, 1868.*

I have finished the little volume entitled, *Philosophie de l'Art dans les Pays Bas* ; it is going to be printed, and I shall see that Germer Baillière sends it you. I am still plunged in my *Traité de l'Intelligence* ; it is very hard work, and I shall not finish with it this year.

Thank you for undertaking to translate my *Idéal dans l'Art*. Will such abstract theories find readers in America ? It is for you to judge ; personally, I should have thought that they would take more interest in a book of facts like the *Philosophie de l'Art dans les Pays Bas*. My lectures next year will probably deal with Art in Antiquity.

You know as much as I do about our literary and political news. The tone of polemics is becoming violent as if nearing an explosion. Conservatives and Liberals, Catholics and Freethinkers seem exasperated. Please God they may go no further than words ! But with us, you know, actions follow words very rapidly ; people lose patience, and very soon exclaim, " Let us shoot each other down, and there will be an end of it." Now, in my opinion, all violence, whether repressed or victorious, will have the effect of retarding the establishment of the Liberal and moderate régime which

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John Durand, born in the United States in a family of Huguenot refugees, translated into English the greater part of M. Taine's works, notably the *Philosophie de l'Art* and the *Origines de la France Contemporaine*, and remained; for more than twenty-five years, one of Taine's most faithful friends.

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is the only passable one. A Republican hurricane would place us in the hands of a military dictator and of the clergy. Government brutality or clerical inquisition would provoke a revolutionary earthquake.

But reasonable people are, like others, embarked in the common ship and obliged to submit to whatever happens.

Farewell, my dear Sir, please keep M. Germer Baillière and myself informed of the success or failure of our joint production, and also let me have news of your health and of everything which concerns you personally. . . :

*To Ernest Renan.*

*Viroflay, June 1869.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—. . . I have just been reading *Saint Paul*. I postponed writing to you about it, because I am finishing a tiresome chapter which requires my full attention. We will talk it over. It is wonderful to see what you have drawn from insignificant and scattered little texts to throw light on the Epistles and on the *man*. You have a huge and closely-meshed net which you have thrown over the whole literature of the time. The book is most interesting, living and coherent. I am here without a Greek St. Paul, to meet the only objection which has presented itself to my mind, When I read his writings, he seemed to me, probably because I was accustomed to classical Greek, more jerky in style, more rugged than in your translations—a kind of Victor Hugo; it seemed a continuous crying out, convulsive and concentrated exclamations, an inward storm in the soul of a logician who is also a fanatic. But you yourself say in a note that any



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literal translation would be unintelligible and that you only kept to the sense and direction of the thought.

Thank you again,

Yours cordially.

*To Madame C. Coignet.*

*Viroflay, July 31, 1869.*

SIR,<sup>1</sup>—I thank you very much for the honour which you have done me in sending me the *Morale Indépendante* ; I read it with much interest and sympathized heartily with the generous feelings and energetic convictions to which this book bears witness. But, from the philosophical point of view, my ideas are absolutely opposed to it, and this will prevent me from sending an account of it to the *Journal des Débats* ; the question is too deep ; it would take a whole volume to state it clearly.

Your opinion is that of the prevailing school ; M. Caro, M. Janet, and especially M. Simon in his lectures and in his book on *Liberty* support the same thesis. In my eyes it is altogether fallacious ; I am a Determinist, not only like John Stuart Mill, but like Spinoza. I do not admit any of the immoral consequences which people usually attempt to attribute to this doctrine. You yourself quote with admiration a phrase from Marcus Aurelius ; now Marcus Aurelius and all the Stoics laid down as a principle the rigorous concatenation of all events and the necessity of all human volitions. In your book you state that the contrary thesis is self-evident. I believe that it is not so, and that philosophers of your school allow themselves to be misled by

<sup>1</sup> See note on page 287.

words. The only man who has used some good arguments when discussing the question is M. Renouvier ; and all his proof is drawn from a mathematical and metaphysical conception, the impossibility of an infinite series and the necessity of a beginning, so that his theory of human liberty is but an application of his general doctrine on origins and on initial factors.

You see my difficulty, Sir ; however great my esteem for your talent, you find in me an adversary ; not only I should contradict you on the abstract question, but I would attack you on the consequences. In my view, if the absolute determination of human volitions be denied, there is no moral science left, no provision ; if Man can better his condition, his mind and his soul, it is only because internal events are rigorously and virtually dependent on each other ; the connexity of facts which gives us our empire over the physical world gives us our empire over the moral world also.

Therefore, Sir, I beg you will accept my apologies at the same time as my thanks, and forgive me if I confine myself to my natural rôle of a sympathetic but dumb contradictor.

## CHAPTER VII

1870

### Plan of a Book on Contemporary Germany— Preliminary Studies—Visit to Frankfort- on-the-Main and to Saxony—War De- clared—Notes on Germany

DURING the early months of 1870 Taine, whilst correcting the proofs of *l'Intelligence*, had sketched out the plan of a new book. He had thought at first of a Theory of the Will which would have been the sequel to and completion of his philosophical work such as he had conceived it in his youth ; but his brain was somewhat tired by the three years of abstract study to which he had constrained it, and he decided to adjourn to a later period the second part of his Psychology. He then resolved to undertake, concerning contemporary Germany, a work analogous to that which he had written on English literature, but more restricted, and bearing chiefly on the nineteenth century ; he only intended to study German literature from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards.

Like all attentive minds, he realized what a formidable neighbour was watching the Eastern frontier of France,

and, without foreseeing the imminence and especially the importance of the catastrophe which threatened his country, he thought he would be accomplishing a patriotic duty by enlightening his fellow-citizens concerning the intellectual culture, the material forces and the national tendencies of their future adversaries.

He was contemplating a stay of several months in Germany during the summer of 1870 ; he prepared for it during the winter by conversations and by extensive readings in Literature and History, a few extracts from which will be found further on. In June he journeyed to Frankfort-on-the-Main, and thence to Weimar and Dresden. He wrote to his mother just before starting : " I have a number of letters of introduction, and hope for a fruitful journey ; I am starting off as I did to Italy and to England. Shall I still have the same freshness and vivacity of impression ? I am tired after my big book, and these three months of German readings have finished me. It will be like going to grass to see living things ; but middle age has come, and I shall perhaps lack the thrill which new experiences used to give me."

He wrote from Weimar a few days later : " I have always found charming people on my travels, who have thanked me for my visit ; we have mutually drawn upon each other's stock. It has done me good. My mind needs thoughts as my stomach needs food ; I feel at present on a happy hunting-ground. . . ."

Beyond the political world, the coming storm was not yet foreseen in Germany ; on July 9 the traveller still wrote to Mme. H. Taine : " Believe me, you are forging chimeras ; I was in England in 1860, at the height of the enlisting of

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volunteers and French threats of war. Englishmen all said to me : ' The Emperor will drive us to extremities,' but they were quite friendly in their welcome ; everywhere the individual is considered apart from the public man. The newspapers try to blacken everything ; the Germans I meet are all more polite than their Press. It is the same with us. . . Herr Curtius will come to Paris in September."

After a short stay in Saxony, Taine was about to start for Berlin, where he intended to spend at least a month, when a family bereavement, the death of Mme. Denuelle, his mother-in-law, brought him back to France suddenly, on July 12.

Political events rapidly followed during the week which succeeded his return ; the thoughts of all turned towards the frontier ; the hour of anticipations of the future was now past, and those who had harboured them sadly enclosed in their hearts the prescience of coming misfortunes. Taine gave up for ever the thought of a work on Germany. " We can no longer be impartial," he said, and his high intellectual probity did not allow him to pronounce a judgment conceived in a prejudiced spirit. His patriotic anxieties were too intense for him to be able to concentrate his thoughts on a new, difficult and abstract work ; he therefore merely took up again the note-books of his English visit, and put into a more literary form the memoranda hastily jotted down in his travels ; these *Notes sur l'Angleterre* appeared in 1871-72. The following extract is from a letter to his mother (July 24, 1870) :—

" In my circle of friends and in the whole of my journey from the frontier every one was against the war ; personally, I am deeply grieved ; I know by experience what one

man is worth and what it costs his mother to bring him up, and in this respect, as in many others, every one German is worth one Frenchman.

“I am trying to edit my notes on England, they will make up a volume; but, what with the heat and these anxieties, I find I cannot do much work.”

In our next volume we will follow Taine through the painful times of the war and the Commune; we shall see how the thinker, drawing forth lessons from these bitter trials, undertook the national self-examination which gave birth to the *Origines de la France Contemporaine*.

#### NOTES ON GERMANY.

December 28, 1869.

##### *A Conversation with Karl Hillebrand.*<sup>1</sup>

Germans are being transformed and changed in character. They are becoming proud, contemptuous and unjust towards strangers; altogether losing the cosmopolitan broad-mindedness, the tolerance and sympathy for others that they had in the time of Goethe. Their motives for pride are the following:—

“1. We renewed Europe, drew the world from Roman decadence and antique corruption by invasion, in the fourth and fifth centuries; our blood revived the old, worn-out blood.

“2. In the sixteenth century we originated Protestantism—a moral renovation. See those nations which are in the

<sup>1</sup> Karl Hillebrand, a naturalized Frenchman, filled the chair of Professor of Foreign Literature at the Douai Faculty. He left France when the war broke out and settled down in Italy, where he died.

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fullness of their growth, Prussia, England, the United States, all those who have shaken off the Roman yoke, and France, which has succeeded in preserving freethought, smothered in Spain and in Italy !

“ 3. We are more virtuous than others, more sincere, more attached to our family duties, and our princes, more laborious, less immoral and more obedient to our conscience and to our conscience only.”

For the last sixty years all their books, all their historical, philological, ethnographical and philosophical researches have told them that they are the *elect race*. The transformation is stupendous. Until now, the German dreamed and thought ; now he acts. There are in him two types of faculties : (1) He can listen to the emotions of his heart, speculate concerning the Absolute, live in abstraction like a philosopher, or sentimentally, writing books, lyrical poetry or music. Or (2) he can be a tradesman, a banker, a manufacturer, a squatter, organize a State, Societies, work and earn money. In short, there is an English, American, Dutch or Hamburger subsoil, long buried under reverie and abstract curiosity, which is emerging at last. It is a new career.

They are superior to the French in respect for unwritten promises ; hence the good repute of the great German trade, their wide credit, ease and sureness in business matters. But they are inferior to us in every-day primitive probity and in the respect for property. Small employées, booking-office clerks, cheat one out of proper change, rob you of a few pence ; hotel servants steal your handkerchiefs and cut the mark out ; nothing of the sort happens in France.

There are not so many polite fictions, impositions and acting as in French society. On the other hand, a lack of courtesy ; in the course of conversation, they tread continually on one's most tender corns.

There is an excessive modesty on certain points. Droz' *Monsieur, Madame et Bébé* would cause a scandal if seen on a virtuous woman's table ; for Droz reveals intimate conjugal life with mocking gaiety and sensuality. On the other hand, married couples hug and kiss each other in public.

All show of legitimate or sincere feelings is considered sacred. After he has known you for two days, a German will give you a psychological portrait of his wife and of his sister.

#### *Readings and Conversations.*

Statistics of taste, from the Reviews : the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the *Revue Contemporaine*, the literary portion of the *Journal des Débats*, of the *Temps*, etc., all our criticism, in fact, seems to be special to France. It is not rhetoric, agreeable fantasy, as Gaston Paris would have it ; the ground work of it is the spirit of Sainte Beuve, Stendhal, Mérimée and Balzac. Likewise in our art criticism, the writer is a psychologist, seeking after moral curiosities ; his centre is the knowledge of the human heart and mind ; because of that, a delicate, shaded and accurate literary style is a necessary instrument. If he writes well, it is not in order to write well, but to produce effects of light and shade, to draw portraits. Psychological portraits, that is the word which most justly defines our need and our talent. That kind of research interests, not special



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scientists, not mere literary and ornamental writers, but diplomats, distinguished women, men of the world who have lived and thought—the fifteen hundred superior minds of Europe.

In my opinion, this is lacking in other countries, and more so in Germany than in England ; German reviews are special magazines for philologists, historians, hellenists and archæologists. They are erudite philosophers and nothing more, very superior to us in that respect, but we have our own domain.

*April 12.*

### *Conversation with Gaston Paris.*

According to Gaston Paris, I am wrong in considering as an act of virtue and abnegation the conduct of a true philosopher, his own, that of Franz Woepke, and that of the German philologists who edit dictionaries, studies on the metre of Plautus, of Aristophanes, etc. It is not simple virtue, nor the zeal of the stone-cutter who thinks of the future cathedral, but real taste and passion.

The German philologist, during his time at the University and a little after, has given himself up to philosophy ; he has made out his system of the world, his general ideas on man, on life, etc. After that he harnesses himself to his speciality ; he finds pleasure, positive pleasure, in tracing out the history of a diphthong or the permutations of a consonant from one language to another or from one epoch to the next. It is enough for him ; this kind of work is that which interests him most, and it brings with it its own reward.

It is not the pleasure of the geologist, of the botanist or of the entomologist, who lives in Nature, and who, while arranging his specimens, imagines, more or less vaguely, the soil or landscape to which they belong. It is an entirely abstract and scientific joy. He is not an artist, he has not the feeling, the half-vision, of the living thing, of the whole. Gaston Paris says that he takes no interest in the individual, in the raucous and unpolished voice of a Barbarian mutilating a Latin termination, or in the costume and attitude of the juggler reciting a *Chanson de Geste* in the yard of a feudal castle. It is in the vowel *o* in itself that he is absorbed, in the accent on the penultimate or the antepenultimate, in the law that is found. "If I wrote the history of a Literature, I should like to abstract the individuals, to look upon them as speaking-trumpets, and to write it like a treatise on chemistry." The individual, the particular living and sensitive personality, has no interest for a German *savant*, but only for Frenchmen, brought up in the school of Balzac and Mérimée.

As I understand it, here are the inner springs of a life of this kind :

1. There is a blank to be filled, a stone to cut. Enthusiasm of youth : the young student has been talking with his Professor, a grandiose and respected being, who has pointed out a useful task ; with the ardour of his twenty summers, he rushes at it heroically (e.g. Woepke and his fourteen hours a day of Arabic during two years).

2. A deep and silent pride : "I am alone or almost alone capable of doing this ; there are but two or three *savants* in Europe who are prepared to plough in this field. It is mine, I am working in the right method, what I turn up

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will be acquired and eternal." It is the same feeling that the Anglo-Saxon squatter experiences in his ground.

3. An Anglo-Germanic capacity for doing tiresome things without tiring of them. It is the patience of an instrumentalist or a copyist, or, better still, of an artisan or an insect. The principle is that pleasant and vivid sensations are unnecessary. Herein lies the difference between the Manchester cotton-spinner and the Paris workman. Hence Robinson Crusoe's patience.

4. Views of the whole obtained through collateral studies; each wishes to have complete views of his own science. See Mommsen concerning inscriptions, numismatics, etc., and Professor Werner in *Die verlorene Handschrift* (by G. Freytag).

April 19.

### *Readings and Recollections.*

(Hettner, *Litteratur-Geschichte*; Burkhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance*; Goethe's prose works, *Schiller*, etc.)

They lack grip, I mean the passionate, energetic, sudden and concentrating conception. For that reason, they are without two things: (1) Individual personalities, clear-cut characters, living figures, so abundant in French or English novels, so poor in German fiction. (See *Die verlorene Handschrift*.) (2) Style, either witty or startling; little words not easily forgotten; brilliant, energetic, concise phrases are absolutely lacking. Goethe's prose is dull.

On the other hand, they are superior to all from two points of view: (1) Erudition, abundance of facts, enormous reading, the exhausting of a subject. (See the two works first quoted above, Lassen, Mommsen.) (2) The philoso-

sophical spirit, panoramic views, general ideas ; these are to be found even in third- or fourth-rate men.

*April 21.*

An essential trait, which, if I succeed in tracing out all its consequences, will give me the structure of the German mind, is the construction of their sentences.

Alone in civilized Europe, they have not the analytical construction, (1) the subject, (2) the predicate in one block, (3) the direct or indirect object. This system of construction penetrates into each individual member of the phrase ; instead of the article, the noun and the series of objects following in a file, they interpolate between the article and the noun all the adjectives and objects, often encased one within the other. This is terrible, and most fatiguing for our French brains, especially if we take German sentences written about 1700.

This is what strikes me at first sight : (1) More sustained attention is necessary to understand this phrase-structure. (2) More memory is required to retain the impression of the initial word which finds its complements two, three or four lines further. (3) This construction indicates a deep sense of *Zusammenhang*, of the connexity between the various parts of the Idea. The material connexion of the phrase translates the moral connexion of the Idea.

It is obvious that the noun placed first places the thing itself before the eyes, as experience and memory place it, and that adjectives, coming afterwards, draw attention to details, characteristics and extracts of the thing. Now

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a German wishes to see the extract before the thing from which it is extracted.

This construction is absolute and universal in German ; adjectives always come before the noun ; objects before subjects. In an incident proposition, the verb is always thrown back to the end and all the objects are interpolated between the subject and the verb. The same rule applies to the principal proposition when it is preceded by a conjunction. Finally, an analogous separation takes place in auxiliary verbs and in verbal propositions.

A German will not complete the expression of his thought until he has previously collected all his materials. His essential mental requirement is evidently to feel the *Zusammenhang*, and he sacrifices everything else to it.

This requirement is absolute ; it is impossible to escape grammatical rules. Construction is not loose, almost *ad libitum*, as in Latin or in Greek, it is compulsory. I could translate Lucian or Plato almost word for word into French ; for Greek inversions and those parts of Greek construction which resemble German do but translate the undulations of Emotion and of Impression. See La Fontaine and Paul Louis Courier, who render those shades in their own style. German has a rigidity of construction which compels one to philosophy, to abstruse and systematic science, nothing more ; life is absent.

*Conversation with Cherbuliez.*

*April 24.*

According to him, France remains of all countries that in which one can be happiest : (1) because the soil is rich

and the climate pleasant ; (2) because Equality is practised and the French character is sympathetic.

In Prussia, especially Eastern Prussia, a manufacturer suffers from many troubles. He may not buy a nobleman's land : the noble landlord preserves police and judicial rights over the locality. The son of a manufacturer may not become an officer in the army, save in an artillery regiment. The arrogance of the nobles is enormous, they exclude all the middle class from their society. In Berlin, a man like Mommsen or Ranke counts for nothing outside his scientific circle ; he may not be asked to Court ; there is a deep separation between those who are *höflich* and those who are not. Ranke is a mere councillor, valued according to his official title ; it is the spirit of a monkish barracks. M. Benedetti, our Ambassador, told me the same thing ; he sees nothing of scholars and scientists, eminent men from the middle classes, because, if he were to invite them, the aristocracy would abandon his receptions. (See similar instances in Freytag's *Soll und Haben*.)

When a Prussian in easy circumstances can come to France, he is delighted, he feels he is on a holiday ; on his return, he cannot abuse France sufficiently. They are now as narrow-minded as we were in 1810, whilst we have adopted Goethe's and Schiller's cosmopolitan sympathies.

Their objection is always "Die Französische Frivolität." They call Art, style, talent, execution, frivolous. The sketch of an idea is enough for them ; a work of art is to them but the æsthetic and especially the moral expression of an *a priori* concept. Hettner reproaches Goethe with not having completely succeeded in bringing out the moral idea in some of his dramas.

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Read yesterday : Kleist's *Michel Kolhaas* and *Marquise d'O.*, which are considered by Germans as two master-pieces of prose narration, though merely second or third rate ; they are absolutely ignorant of the art of composition, of producing a living effect by means of a vivid phrase : one meets with indirect discourse at every page, it reads like the writings of Florian's time. To my mind, Schiller's *Thirty Years' War*, and Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, *Wilhelm Meister* and *Dichtung und Wahrheit* are badly written, or even not written at all ; there is a groundwork of Academic phrase ; they do not understand the value of a word, of a form of expression, they do not know how to syncopate, to throw light on a particular point, to bring out a gesture or a landscape. Every other short story in the *Vie Parisienne* is better done, and all our great writers, Mérimée, Balzac, Stendhal, George Sand, leave them miles behind. There is the same difference between their pictures and ours.

The cause of it is that a French writer sees his reader in his imagination, a refined, well-read man, impatient and difficult to please, a man who requires the strongest and most delicate intellectual *cuisine*, demanding varied emotions, fantasy, contained passion, deep and rapid insight into passing objects, in short an infinity of varied and refined pleasures of an exalted kind, of which a German has not the faintest idea. A German wishes to eat, that is all, and he contents himself with half-cooked meat and boiled potatoes, over which he sometimes throws a big pinch of pepper.

May 5.

Here is an idea of Hillebrand's which agrees with the above note.

There are no writers in Germany, such as Scribe, Pigault-Lebrun, Paul de Kock, or About (*Le Cas de M. Guérin*, etc.), writing only to amuse, to afford a pleasant hour's reading; now, that is the chief use of the greater number of writers of moderate talent. The very smallest German writer or novelist attempts to put before us, like Goethe, wide philosophical ideas, views on Nature, Humanity, Society, God, Ethics, etc. Hence profound dulness, and signal failure, the author being incompetent; as well try to put the whole world into a bottle.

Excellent articles in the *Hermès* (a German Review), one by Mommsen showing how Clusius served as a common document both for Tacitus and Plutarch (*Lives of Otto and Vitellius*).

Here is real Philology, requiring, with fastidious erudition a literary sagacity and acuteness of the highest order. The value of a historian is estimated instead of being admitted as a whole; his authority is measured, his sources traced back; the original author is delicately guessed at from the concordance of two narratives, and from this starting point, the method of the historian, his omissions, his additions, his taste for colour, his weakness in drawing (Tacitus), his education, and his ruling passion are deduced. See how Lachman and Niebuhr point out Livy's sources and retrace the poetical legends of which he has made use. And all the work that has been done on the composition and style of the Gospels! We have here a whole science which is quite unknown in France;



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all the writers of Greek and Latin antiquity are studied word for word, the critic can see his authors actually writing, having previously followed out their whole train of thought. A book is a product, it can only be understood by one who has been mentally present at its production. It is like an ultimate lake: what are the streams and springs which have poured their waters into it?

A complete mind can set to work on these lines, taking for an object a detailed and systematic acquaintance with Latin Antiquity and a mental picture of it, and, to that effect, studying inscriptions, medals, architecture, law—then taking up monography, studying like Mommsen (and in the same book) the *Prefecti frumenti dandi* or any bad Latin poem in Virgilian cantos discovered yesterday or in the fourth century. Freytag has given a good picture of this kind of life in his Professor Werner (*Die verlorene Handschrift*). \*

We do something analogous, but from a special and entirely literary point of view. For instance, if we compare Virgil's gods with Homer's, we show that Virgil's are Livia, Augustus, great Roman nobles and freedmen in high positions.

May 10.

Hettner's "*Litteratur Geschichte*."

This is not a history of Literature in the sense which we attribute to the word. It is a history of the ideas of which moral Man is the object, whether expressed on the stage, in lyrical or heroic poetry, novels, philosophy, theology, the science of law, education, or in political theory. Only the special, technical part of the latter sciences is left on one side.

It makes up a whole, which might be entitled : "History of Moral Science, insomuch as it assumes a general and universally accessible expression."

Such a meaning given to the word Literature is altogether German ; for us, the word primarily signifies talent ; by literary talent, we understand the art of showing to the reader, or, more accurately speaking, of provoking in him, sensations and sentiments like those which are experienced by the author.

This constitutes style : to have a refined and passionate soul, capable of irony, enthusiasm, hatred, admiration, to pass in the course of one page through twenty shades of emotion, to put fifty different intonations into fifty succeeding sentences, and to transfer those successive states exactly into the reader's mind—there is talent, or genius. Whoever can do so is a writer, whether he be a biographer, a poet, a novelist, an orator or a philosopher.

To my mind the history of a Literature is the history of those writings where the above talent appears, and the complete explanation of those writings by the portrait and individual biography of the author and the description of the time in which he lived.

All other writings are of no account, and serve as mere backgrounds. What Germans call form is, in my opinion, essential. There is not the shadow of talent or style in all those writers by whom I have just been reading extracts ; they make one yawn, and then yawn again. It is all very rational, instructive, erudite, and praiseworthy but nothing more.

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Everything in a German is consciously acquired. See Lessing's and Winckelmann's efforts to create the theory, and subsequently the practice of the stage in one case and of art in the other. See the Anacreontists, Gottsched's disciples, even Goethe and Schiller.

They say to themselves, "We are not cultured; let us obtain culture; let us create artists, writers, poets, a unified State, etc." And, with infinite, reflecting and systematic efforts, they labour to that end, sometimes with success, but not with sufficient fruit when it is a question of art and artists. Oranges do not grow in soil intended for pine-trees. . . . Look at the English and their efforts to make painters (Ruskin, Exhibitions, Art Societies, etc.); they are stroking Art the wrong way!

And yet the English have the good sense to abstain on certain points; it does not occur to them to deplore the emptiness of their stage.

Germans say, "We want a dramatic school, we will have one." Our own nineteenth century Renaissance has also made the mistake of trying to create things which should be born spontaneously.

The typical German has a reasoning, reflecting brain, with a taste for abstractions, systems, science and books, and a way of directing his life according to the elaboration of his convictions. One cannot make artists of such material.

There is something perfectly ridiculous in the history of all this literature; it is like a continuous nonsense; an attempt to manufacture an Art by means of preconceived ~~Æ~~sthetics.

I have read Fichte and Ulrich's philosophical journal : *Zur Logischen Frage*.

It has the faults and general direction to be found in literature. They begin by theory : what should absolute science be ? Starting from that, they construct ; they must make a discovery, a study of detail ; Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer and Hartmann all commit the same error.

The principle of their Logic and Metaphysic for the last sixty years has been this : to make out the science of Science, seek what Nature should be, so that the mind may know it.

It is far better to seek, with Stuart Mill, how the human mind knows, take as examples certain complete and definite sciences and portions of science, and then to generalize. They go to work in the opposite way, always placing the cart before the horse.

If I wish to reason on Thought and Knowledge, I must first study some thoughts and knowledge, and admit that, in fact we know certain things. It is impossible to examine *a priori* whether we can know. The word *to know* means nothing to me until I have observed and compared instances of knowledge. Facts alone, the smallest, definite facts, can furnish general ideas.

It is true that by this method I shall not attain to definite proof. I shall find but a concordance, but that is all I can have.

To study method first is foolishness. Practice, and from your practice extract rules. We have made the same mistake in philosophy, through following their example.

See Jouffroy and Cousin and their preparatory lessons

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on Method. It is Poetics before poetry, like Victor Hugo's Prefaces.

What is called original talent is not merely a manner of being agreeable ; it is a method of thinking and imagining, a method which the author could not always explain, which he practises involuntarily and which lends value to all the ideas which he expresses. It is this method, this inborn process which constitutes the whole merit of a great orator or dramatist, such as Macaulay, Shakespeare, Courier, Balzac, Flaubert, Mérimée, etc. . . .

To study it is to lay bare the great processes of Logic and Psychology.

## APPENDICES



# I

## PLAN OF THE TREATISE ON CONSCIOUSNESS

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*A. First Subdivision : Extension of Consciousness in Time.—Memory and Prevision.*—Chap. I. Memory and Prevision are real and distinct phenomena.—Chap. II. Nature of Memory and Prevision.—Chap. III. Generation of Memory.—Chap. IV. Development or history of Memory.

*B. Second Subdivision.—Extension of Consciousness in Space.—Consciousness of particular and complex things.—Of Exterior Perception.*—Chap. I. The Perception of exterior objects is a real and distinct phenomenon.—Chap. II. Nature



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of Exterior Perception.—Chap. III. Generation of Exterior Perception.—Chap. IV. Development of Exterior Perception.

*Third Division.—Consciousness of abstract objects.*

*First Subdivision : Passage from Complexity to Abstraction.*—Chap. I. Consciousness of abstract objects is a real and distinct phenomenon.—Chap. II. Nature of the consciousness of abstracts. Signs.

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### PART II

PRACTICAL FUNCTIONS, OR OPERATIONS THROUGH WHICH THE  
IDEA IS REPRODUCED IN THE REALITY

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*First Subdivision.*—Chap. I. Passion, a real and distinct fact.—Chap. II. Nature of Pleasure and Pain in general.—Chap. III. Nature of Desire in general.

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*Third Subdivision.*—Chap. V. Of Passions in particular in so much as they are caused by ideas : (a) By the idea of Good. Of the *ego*. Of others. Abstract. (b) By the idea of Beauty. In extended things. In the operations of the *ego*. (c) By the idea of a Truth. By opposition to a false or doubtful thing : Certainty. By the development of a given idea : System.

*Second Division.—Of the Will.*

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abstract ideas. (4) Pure abstract ideas compared with abstract ideas transformed into metaphors. (5) Consciousness of a present fact compared with a recollection or a prevision. Recollections compared with each other, and previsions compared with each other. Memory compared with prevision. (6) Consciousness of a fact as more or less probable or possible, compared with consciousness of the same fact as real and certain. (7) The same consciousness more or less precise. (8) The same consciousness more or less attentive. (9) The same abstract consciousness, according to its greater or less vicinity to particular facts. (10) Epitome.—Chap. II. *Tendency Fixed*. (1) Fixed without any conflict. (2) Fixed after a conflict, having an immediate and present action for its object. (3) Fixed after a conflict, having a more or less distant action for its object. (4) Fixed after a conflict, having a more or less general action for its object. (5) Rule of preponderance. The final tendency is that which is strongest according to given laws. (a) Psychological induction, (b) historical induction, (c) *a priori* proof, (d) refutations, (e) force of the settled tendency.—Chap. III. *Influence of the fixed tendency*: (1) On movements. Why? (2) On consciousness. Why? (3) On Sensations, Pleasures, Pains, Tendencies. Why? Epitome.

### *Third Division.—Of Movements.*

Chap. I. *Organs*: (1) Bones, articulations, ligaments, tendons, aponeuroses. (2) Muscles: Divisions, Structure, Contraction. Causes of contraction. (3) Cranio-spinal nerves; great sympathetic nerves. Their functions. (4) Spinal cord, *medulla oblongata*, *Pons Varolii*. (5) Peduncle, *optic chiasma*, striated nerves, cerebellum, hemispheres. Epitome. The phenomenon and its laws are known for non-nervous parts; the laws, but not the phenomenon, are known for nervous parts.—Chap. II. *Movements which are not determined by conscious operations*: (1) Determined by exterior irritation. (2) Automatic. (3) Antagonistic. (4) Reflex: (5) Laws of these movements.—Chap. III. *Movements determined by conscious operations*: (1) Involuntary and objectless: (2) Voluntary

## APPENDIX I

and simple. (3) Voluntary and complex. (4) Gestures, attitudes, expressive signs. (I) Effect of the passions on gestures. (II) Effect of gestures on Passion. (III) Inclination to imitate gestures. (IV) Interpretation : (a) of gestures and physiognomy ; (b) of the voice ; (c) of the permanent state of the body and of the face. (V) Laws of those movements. Epitome.

*Abnormal and inferior states of the theoretical and practical functions.* Chap. I. Sleep. Madness.—Chap. II. Instinct. Animal Magnetism.

## II

# PREFACE<sup>1</sup> TO THE STUDY ON STUART MILL

When this study was first published, Mr. Stuart Mill did me the honour of writing to me that "it would be impossible to give in a few pages a more complete and accurate idea of the contents of my book, as an embodiment of philosophical doctrine. But," he added, "I think you are mistaken in considering this point of view as particularly English. It was so during the first half of the eighteenth century, from Locke onwards, until the reaction against Hume. This reaction, which began in Scotland, has long assumed the Germanic form and has ended by invading everything. When I wrote my book, I was practically alone in my opinion, and, though my mode of thinking has met with a degree of sympathy which I did not in the least expect, there are still in England twenty *a priori* and spiritualistic philosophers to one partisan of the doctrine of Experience."

This observation is very true : I had myself been able to make it, having been brought up in Scotch philosophy and among Reid's books. My only answer is that some philosophers do not count, and that all such, English or not, spiritualistic or otherwise, may be left on one side without any loss

<sup>1</sup> This Preface was omitted when *English Positivism, a Study on Stuart Mill*, was incorporated into the *History of English Literature*. The following letter, written in faultless French, was written by Mill to Taine when the Study first appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

## APPENDIX II

Every half-century, perhaps only every century or every other century, a man appears who *thinks*: Bacon and Hume in England, Descartes and Condillac in France, Kant and Hegel in Germany; the rest of the time, the stage remains empty and ordinary men crowd on to it, offering to the public what the public asks for, sensualists or idealists, according to the tendencies of the time, sufficiently learned and capable of acting the principal part, of repeating the old melodies, well versed in the current repertoire, but devoid of original invention, mere performers coming after composers. At this moment, the stage in Europe is empty. Germans are transcribing or transposing old French Materialism; the French, half asleep, and from mere habit, listen with a *distract*, bored air to the bravura passages and fine eloquent phrases which Public Education has been repeating for thirty years. In this great silence, and among these monotonous utilities, a master now comes forward and speaks. Nothing like it has been heard since Hegel.

January, 1864.

*John Stuart Mill to H. Taine.*

SIR,—Although at the present time I have the honour of knowing you through your writings only, I hope you will not think it out of place that I should express to you the very great personal satisfaction, together with a disinterested admiration, which I experienced on reading the account of my system of Logic which you have kindly published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. It would be impossible to give in a few pages a more complete and accurate idea of the contents of my book as an embodiment of philosophical doctrine. I will add that it was impossible to present this *ensemble* of opinions to French readers in a more attractive manner, and this, to a thinker, is of paramount importance: As to your criticism of the psychological point of view which characterizes the work, it is not for me to judge of it. But I think you are mistaken in considering this point of view as particularly English. It was so during the first half of the eighteenth century, from Locke onwards until the reaction

## APPENDIX II

against Hume. This reaction, which began in Scotland, has long assumed the Teutonic form, and has ended by invading everything. When I wrote my book, I was practically alone of my opinion, and, though my mode of thinking has met with a degree of sympathy which I did not in the least expect, there are still in England twenty *a priori* or spiritualistic philosophers to one partisan of the doctrine of Experience. During the whole of our seventy years' reaction, the philosophy of Experience has here been looked upon as French, just as you call it English. To my mind, both sides are in error. The two systems follow each other by the universal law of reactions. Indeed, Germany is now turning towards the *a posteriori* doctrine. Only the different countries do not coincide exactly either in their revolutions or in their counter-revolutions.

Accept, Sir, the expression of my true respect and most distinguished consideration.

J. S. MILL.

### III

## PLAN OF THE "LAWS IN HISTORY"

### PART I

#### ANALYSIS OF THE ACTUAL

(I) There is a fundamental and elementary action in every order of facts.

Likewise, in every crystal there is one small primordial crystal, repeated everywhere. And in every class of animals there is an abstract type ; for instance, the vertebrate type.

Orders of fact are : (1) Agriculture, Industry, Commerce (the action of Man on Matter) ; (2) Family and Society in different forms (the action of Man on Man) ; (3) Art, Religion. Philosophy (the action of Man on Universals).

(II) Define this elementary action in each order of facts.

For instance, in the action on Matter, the elementary action is this : Man, by means of his muscular power, modifies Matter according to observations which he has made on its properties, and, most frequently, he modifies it in the company and with the help of other men. So that his success in doing so depends : (1) On his muscular and moral resistance to weariness. (2) On his sagacity and accurate perception of the properties of matter. (3) On his aptitude to Association, that is to Command and to Obedience.

According to the modifications which the climate, the race and the moment bring to bear on this elementary action and on the moral dispositions which produce it, the whole action of Man on Matter becomes changed. Ditto for the others.

## APPENDIX III

For example, the elementary action in Religion is as follows : (1) To conceive of things as a whole by one general idea—which depends on the metaphysical aptitude of the race and on the intellectual moment ; (2) To conceive this whole, not abstractedly, but personifying it and making it more or less tangible—which depends on the state of the imagination and on imaginative aptitudes ; (3) to conceive this Universal personified, not as a poetical and artistic action, but as a thing actually existing—which depends on a condition of excitement, exaltation or ignorance.

(III) To find out the relations which exist between elementary actions and what they have in common.

For instance, Religion, Art and Philosophy have a common part in their elementary actions and the conception of the Universals. (This law of the connexion between the divers orders of facts is the first which I have discovered.)

(IV) To find out how this elementary action is produced and how it endures ; it has a history.

For instance, the birth, development and decadence of an Art or a Religion.

The general law is that this action produces a form, a dogma, an establishment, etc., which endures from sheer force of inertia long after the action has ceased to take place.

## PART II

### ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL

Given the production of a Religion, an Art, a form of Society ; it is a new elementary action which appears. On what conditions does it depend ?

Historically, it depends : (1) On the race. (2) On the surroundings. (3) On the moment.

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*Found in a note-book (1862-63).*

The first or second chapter states the typical fact of each order : Industry, Family, State, Art, Religion, Philosophy.



## APPENDIX III

It is not to be sought for in History or in the masses, but in the unequal molecule which is the acting individual or a biography, a workman before his bench, Luther or Cromwell seeking for faith, La Fontaine writing, any young Englishman getting married. It is by actual observation that it can be isolated.

In the workman, handling Matter, the typical fact comprises : (1) Perseverance, to persist in monotonous occupation in spite of physical and mental weariness ; (2) Sagacity, to discover the best means of doing well ; (3) capacity for Association, to work in company under a Chief.

## IV

# PLAN OF A BOOK

*Religion and Society in France:*

November 1862.

Some say : we must decentralize, come nearer to Protestant Christianity. Others say : We must suppress established religions, return to that of Rousseau and Voltaire, consult the nation concerning public affairs, establish the Republic, etc. . . .

We will apply our scientific method to these questions. Let us abstract the merits and faults of the Republic, of Christianity and of centralization, and consider them as simple facts, of which we must determine the nature and conditions. Let us treat Politics as we treat Literature and History.

(1) In what does Catholicism (French Catholicism) consist ?

An immutable and precise dogma. The interpretation of it in the hands of the clergy. The clergy not an elective body. Religious lukewarmness, etc. (Find all the characteristics, either by direct observations on living examples, or through the study of laws and dogma, etc.)

(2) Given the constitutive characteristics, what moral dispositions and what social state do they depend on ?

(The sheep-like state of mind. Want of education in women and in the lower classes. French indifference concerning the Infinite and the Beyond, etc.)

(3) Consequences : Several of these conditions can be changed ; several cannot. Therefore it is impossible to establish Protestantism, for instance.

## APPENDIX IV

Several of these conditions will change. For instance, positive knowledge is in progress and reaching moral matters. Therefore Catholicism is decreasing.

(All this, like Macchiavelli, without leaning towards one side or the other ; the question to be treated like a physiological state.)

Likewise for the State.

(Such a book would be a help to all parties, showing them difficulties, conditions of success, etc., etc.)

# V

## METAPHYSICAL NOTE

*Written at Sainte Odile.*

*May, 1867.*

Absolute solitude brings one back *zum höchsten*, to Metaphysics.

Principle of sufficient reason; it comes back to that identity.

(1) Given a determinate object A, a determinate condition B, occurs. Experimentally, A becomes C. Given the same object A (exactly the same) at another moment (supposing that this different position in Time have no influence and can be considered as null), let the same condition B (with the same reservation) occur again, I say that this A will also become C. For the second A is absolutely substitutable to the first, and the second B to the first.

Note that, in order that the substitution should be completely possible, the difference of place and time must be eliminated. There are cases where the difference in Time constitutes an efficacious new condition (second moment of the fall of a body). Likewise for the condition of place, (difference in the oscillations of a pendulum on a mountain and in a mine).

(2) The axioms of mechanics are derived from that and not from experience as Stuart Mill says.

A body set in motion continues its motion for ever (save for the resistance of other bodies).

Started off on a straight line, it continues its motion in a straight line and with the same speed (same reservations).

## APPENDIX V

For the first principle, the first moment is Motion ; parts of Time being given all alike and substitutable to each other, the second moment is substitutable to the first. Ditto for the straight direction and for speed.

If, after one yard and one minute on a straight line, the motion became altered or arrested, the second yard would no longer be substitutable to the first, nor the second minute to the first, which they are in abstract Space and Time, that is, considered as pure measurements, the parts of which are respectively substitutable to each other.

They are treated thus in geometry and arithmetic. Given triangle A and triangle B, having an equal side comprised between two equal angles ; we start from that secret principle that the place in Space is indifferent, and the second, being proved to be substitutable to the first, has all its properties:











